

**PhD Thesis  
On**

**Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of Bangladesh:  
An Ethnographic Study**

***Dedicated***

***to***

***All Manipuri Women in Bangladesh  
who are deprived and discriminated  
in all spheres of life***

**PhD Thesis**  
**On**  
**Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of**  
**Bangladesh: An Ethnographic Study**

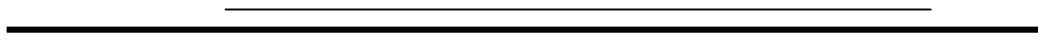
**Supervised By**

**Dr. Nazmunnessa Mahtab**

Professor

Department of Women and Gender Studies

University of Dhaka



**PhD Thesis**  
**On**  
**Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of**  
**Bangladesh: An Ethnographic Study**

**Submitted By**

**Esmat Ara**

PhD fellow

Registration No: 33(2012-13)

Department of Women and Gender Studies

University of Dhaka

## **Letter of Permission**

I am immensely pleased to declare that Esma Ara, Reg. No. 33/2012-2013, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, has been completed the PhD thesis having the title “**Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of Bangladesh: An Ethnographic Study**”. This paper has been prepared for the fulfillment of her PhD degree.

I have supervised her from the beginning to the end of the research report. She has done her assigned task in a synchronized way. And in every steps of her study, she followed my direction and instructions. After scrutinizing the final research report, now I am pleased to permit her to submit and defend this research report (thesis) before the respective judges.

I also certify that this paper is original one and has not been submitted anywhere for any purpose.

I wish her all the best in the endeavor.

**Dr. Nazmunnessa Mahtab**

Professor

Department of Women and Gender Studies

University of Dhaka

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### **Executive Summary**

Sylhet division is located in the North-eastern part of Bangladesh. The greater Sylhet division contains a significant concentration of ethnic peoples' of Bangladesh. Among them, Manipuris are remarkable in approach and activities. Their settlement in this region brings a long historical legacy of war and conflict among the kings (Raja) of the Manipur state of India. They have been living in this region for hundreds of years. They mostly live in the green forest and plain lands close to the nature. The Manipuris of this region never like the interference of the people of other community, and they never welcome the stranger. They have their own socio-cultural background, religious beliefs, values, rituals and economic system. Their patriarchal social structure and restricted approach are the main hindrance to conduct comprehensive and systematic study on them. The researcher conducted the study titled on "Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of Bangladesh: An Ethnographic Study" which was very challenging in their socio-economic context. This study has been conducted following qualitative approach based on primary and secondary data.

The ethnographic research design has been followed employing purposive sampling method. In-depth interview, focus group discussion and observation have been considered as the most important data collection tools. Study findings reveal that Manipuri community is not aware about gender discrimination. But gender discrimination exists extremely in this community; specially women are dominated, neglected and oppressed in every walk of life. Their position is vulnerable and considering subordinate and inferior to male. The patriarchal social structure, male dominated family pattern, poverty, lack of education and awareness, tradition and superstitions, religious beliefs and customs are responsible for making women subordinate and imposing unequal treatment to them in Manipuri society. The Manipuris cultural practices also present women as the passive actors and factors. Gender discrimination starts from family in the community and prevails throughout the life from birth to death. The glorious 'Sashthi' ceremony of a boy baby's birth held by the parents and family, and their attitudes express the symbol of discrimination between a boy and a girl. In family, women take their meals at last and at least after feeding all other members of the family. Male gets special preference regarding food, clothes, health, nutrition, movement, education, services, marriage, divorce and property inheritance. Women have no freedom of choice and decision making rights; they only bound to hold the decisions of the male. Besides the husband and other male members of the family, they must obey and respect to the decision of the 'Panchayet'

(male dominated institution). Furthermore, women are discriminated and harassed by other women of in-law families. In addition to that they are not only discriminated within their own community, but also oppressed and harassed by the majority Bengali people. The government and non-government organizations, civil society, international donor agencies, political leaders and social workers should play key role to reduce and eliminate the remaining discrimination against Manipuri women, and to include them in the efforts of national development as the active partner of holistic development programs of Bangladesh. The researcher hopes that the study findings will be the path finder and guidelines for future researchers and academics opening up the horizon of original knowledge which is assumed to pave the way for further study on the very issue in a different angle calling attention to policy makers in this regard to promote the situation of Manipuri women of Bangladesh.

### **List of Abbreviations**

BMSS	: Bangladesh Manipuri Sahittay Sangsad.
BMSP	: Bangladesh Manipuri Sangskritik Parishad
BMSS	: Bangladesh Manipuri Sishu Sangstha.
BMJS	: Bangladesh Manipuri Jubo Samity
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
ECDO	: Ethnic Community Development Organization
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
GAD	: Gender and Development
GO	: Government
MLSS	: Member of Lower Subordinate Staff
MMKP	: Manipuri Muslim Kallayan Parishad
MSKP	: Manipuri Somproday Kallayan Parishad
MSS	: Manipuri Satra Sangsad.
NGO	: Non Government Organization.
SUST	: Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet
WAD	: Women and Development
WID	: Women in Development



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**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION**



## INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

### Nature of Inquiry

#### 1.1 Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the gendered societies like any other country of Asia. In a gendered society both men and women must conform to the dominant values. When the whole world is patrolling forward to achieve the millennium development goals, women in Bangladesh have persisted at the dark in many cases. Gender discrimination is a familiar experience in our country and the women are tormenting from relentless discrimination in a male-dominated patriarchal society. In Bangladesh, over the last three decades, emphasis has been given on ensuring gender equality through the adoption of various policies and strategies. However, the effectiveness is far away from satisfaction.

Almighty creates human being on the earth as the best creation in the two main form of male and female as a counterfeit to each other, not as an opponent. Nonetheless, women in our country have to face severe gender discrimination due to the over-shadow of male members in our society. Poverty is the major reason of gender discrimination in Bangladesh. Furthermore, traditional custom, religious practices, illiteracy, orthodox, superstitious beliefs, and paternal outlook are also considered as the strong agents of gender discrimination. In our country, women are disapproved in all aspects of life, and are in a disadvantaged situation compared to men. Women have a subordinate position in all spheres of life. In the family, discrimination between men and women starts from very beginning at birth. Generally, the birth of a boy is celebrated by announcing loud azan; whereas the birth of a girl does not make the environment such enjoyable to the family members and relatives, and in rare case azan is whispered in her ears. Birth of a boy is also celebrated by distribution of sweets to friends and neighbors, but rarely such event takes place after the born of a girl. During the naming ceremony 'Akika'<sup>1</sup>, two goats are slaughtered for a boy and one goat for a girl. The picture of tribal women in Bangladesh is rather worse, and even they are often destitute of the human rights - except Garos and Khasis (Nasrin, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> After the birth of a baby name is given through a ceremony.

Although Bangladesh is a small country, she has a rich cultural heritage and a land of diversity including plain field, hills, forests and rivers. It is not only the Bengalis (majority people) who have contributed this culture, but also the indigenous<sup>2</sup> communities of the country (Odhikar, 2001). There are forty five small and big Indigenous communities with various language and ethnicity who have been living in different parts of Bangladesh for many centuries (Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, 2001; Chakma, 2004). The major groups are Chakmas, Marmas, Murungs, Chaks, Bowms, Pankoos, Khiyangs, Khumis, Tripura, Garos, SantalsLushais, Hajongs, Khasis, Oraons, Rajbangshi, Manipuris etc. (Chakma, 1999).

Manipuris constitute a microscopic national minority in Bangladesh. Naturally, they enjoy lesser opportunities than the other communities, and especially, the Manipuri women are in adjuvant position both within their community and outside. The literacy rate among Manipuri community is not mentionable and they are not aware of gender discrimination. They usually believe on fate and think that nature has decided this miserable situation to them. However, they are more industrious compare to their male partners, and contributing both physically and mentally to afford the family in a better way, but they still remain discriminated and neglected in every sphere of life.

The birth of a daughter in Manipuri family causes more worry than the birth of a son. The daughters contribute most to their family as well as to the society, even to their husband's houses. The son is free of chain and not accountable for his duties to the family, whereas the daughter for all cases is accountable to parents. The gender- prejudice against women remains a stigma. As a result, in the long run a daughter loses her personal identity and equality with a son that creates a legacy of the women's subordinate position for the rest of their life. In every Manipuri family, it is usually observed that a house wife takes her meals at last and least. This culture starts at their childhood in the parents family and brings along with the rest of life even in the husband's house.

Most of the Manipuri mothers provide training to their daughters to be submissive to the husband and their relatives.

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<sup>2</sup> Indigenous people are descended from and identify with the original inhabitants of a given region, maintain unique traditions and retain social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live.

In a sense, these established practices root the discrimination and enlarge the opportunity of husband to exploit their wife both physically and mentally. A Manipuri woman cannot imagine national politics and global outlook. They can think and keep herself within the boundary walls; but most of the young and educated girls having brilliant caliber, demonstrate total disinterest in political participation (Mohen, 2005).

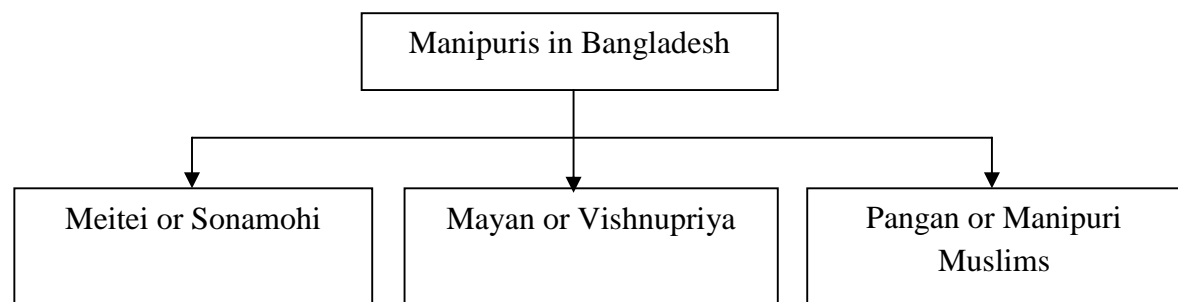
Naturally the Manipuri women are gentle and wish to enjoy normal and peaceful life. In some cases, they have no right to take decisions. Although they work more than the male and they have equal right in earning money, they usually face different types of discriminatory attitudes at their work place like low wage, eve teasing, sexual harassment and unequal treatment in the case of promotion. The decision of taking children totally depends on the wish of their husband, even the women have no decision making power in case of pregnancy. The government of Bangladesh reserve quota for indigenous communities in the civil service, but it is useless, as they have no opportunity to reach at that stage. Moreover, their political involvement is miserable. But they are rapidly moving forward to get rid of such situation. The Manipuri women are neglected and discriminated by both their male members within their community and by the other communities of Bangladesh. As the indigenous people are the part of our country, the indigenous women also face those types of violence and discrimination typical to a Bangladeshi woman.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

In different periods of time, a good number of Manipuri people have migrated from Manipur state of India, and settled in several parts of Bangladesh, are presently known as the Bangladeshi Manipuris. The exact time of the Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh is not accurately known, but roughly it dates back to about 300 years (Haider, 2010). The Manipuris who have been settled in different parts of Bangladesh are rooted in Manipur state of India, but they had not directly migrated here from Manipur state, while they settled here through the sates of Asam, Cachar, and Tripura (Sheram, 2005).

Among different ethnic minority groups living in greater Sylhet division, Manipuri is the dominant indigenous community, who has been settled in the plain lands. Their major concentration is in Kamalgonj Thana of Moulvibazar district in Sylhet division. “They are dispersed in small pockets of settlement that are surrounded by areas inhabited by the mainstream people of Bangladesh” (Ahmed and Singh, 2007: 2).

In rudimentary stage, Manipuri settlements were scattered from Sylhet to Dhaka, Mymensing and Comilla. Presently, the settlements in Dhaka, Comilla and Mymensing faded away for a number of social, economic and political reasons. Now, the Bangladeshi Manipuris are located mainly in four districts (Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet, and Sunamganj) of greater Sylhet division. Bangladeshi Manipuris are mainly of three categories: (a) Meitei or Sonamohi; (b) Mayan or Vishnupriya; and (c) Meitei Pangan or Manipuri Muslims (Haider, 2010).



**Figure 1:** Types of Manipuris in Bangladesh

Although from the very early stage the Manipuris preferred to remain close to nature and isolate them from the mainstream people of Bangladesh, these days Manipuri people changed their mentality as well as attitudes. Although, gradually the situation of the Manipuri women is somehow changing, but their position in family and state is still vulnerable.

We can find lots of Manipuri women are providing their excellence as profession as like Teachers, Doctors, lawyers, Executives, Writers or social workers. Manipuri women struggle throughout their lives to bring a peaceful and prosperous family. But some women have been put in a heavy burden in the name of family life. “They accepted the way they spend their lives after marriage without a question, because it is an old tradition” (Bangladesh News, November-8, 2008). A number of researchers conducted their studies on the issue of their life style, however, from gender discrimination perspective, research works and studies tend to be ignored in Manipuri society. From this point of view, this study would be the pathfinder for future researchers on this issue from different angles.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

In 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1988 through the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Islam was announced as the state religion, which tends the indigenous communities as minority groups both in social and religious perspectives.

The Constitution of Bangladesh does not make any specific rules for ensuring the safety and security of disadvantaged minority. Article 28 (4) of the Constitution of Bangladesh states: “Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making special provision in favour of women and children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens (The Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, as modified upto 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1998). But this article is vague, because, “the backward section” has not been clarified here.

The indigenous people are neglected in every sphere of life. The Manipuri women are very hard working, they perform all the household activities including child caring, and also involved in outside job. Very few Manipuris are involved in government and Non-government organizations; however, the Manipuri women’s share is not mentionable. Teaching has become a suitable profession which has also been traditionally and socially accepted for females. But, on the other hand, due to the lack of higher education among Manipuri women, very few of them find access to administrative and official jobs (Mohen, 2005). The Government of Bangladesh has a provision to preserve and distribute specific areas of employment for the indigenous people recognizing them as an underdeveloped section of the population.

Though they are ethnically and ancestrally included within the indigenous section of population in Bangladesh, the Manipuris feel dishonored to introduce themselves as indigenous. This attitude restricts them from gaining positive discrimination in government jobs (Ahmmed and Singh, 2007).

The knowledge about use of modern health-care and balanced diet is very poor among Manipuri women. A large portion of female population faces drastic health complications, as a result of which, female death mostly occurs in her middle age. The Manipuri women are governed by the religious or social rules of law. The social rules treat women differently from men and generally as a subordinate. Manipuri women are still deprived of their rights. Where ever a wife goes, she is bound to take prior permission from her husband first and next from the head of the family. This results to strict maintenance of guardianship by men over women.

It is unwritten but strict rule to obey the husbands' decision for a wife in every aspect of life, and she never ignores the determined subjects by the husband. Sometimes she is discriminated by her mother-in-law as a powerful figure, who rules the household direct on the shoulders of other women. After the death of head of the family, the eldest son inherits the whole of movable or immovable property according to the Hindu law of inheritance. A Bangladeshi Manipuri woman lives in a world of multiple disadvantages, mal-nutrition, family-dependence - insubordination, social inequality, generation-gaps and lastly social prejudices (Mohen, 2005).

Gender discrimination in Manipuri society is noticed in different forms; but Manipuri women do not express their needs, problems and discriminations to anybody considering it as a dishonor. Furthermore, they are very much conservative and follow the traditional inhuman rules and regulations. And their demands remain unnoticed within the boundaries of development as well as national affairs. The Manipuri society is patriarchal in nature. Indigenous women are more active than male in agricultural sector. Despite participating with male outside the household task, indigenous women are not relieved from the family burden. Indigenous women go to work often holding their babies on their backs with a piece of cloth and it seems as a normal fact and presents very easily; in which is bestowed the picture of unrevealed gender politics. Except Garo and Khasis, all other indigenous women are in subordinate position in their respective society. This subordination is constructed with the predominating opinion of patriarchy. Women are inferior firstly in family structure and secondly in capitalist social structure (Nasrin, 2003).

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

A lot of research works on studies have been conducted in Bangladesh on either the life style or the problems of indigenous communities. Unfortunately, a very limited number of research works has been done regarding the gender discrimination of ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. It is indispensable, because it will explore the miserable situation of indigenous women along with other deprivations of those communities. This work will also meet the academic demands in different fields as well as the greater benefit of the society. In order to find out the real causes and consequences of indigenous women's miserable situation as well as to attract policy makers, donors, civil society and NGOs attention regarding this issue, the researcher has selected this topic for her research work.

Gender inequality is deeply rooted in Bangladesh. Society is both hierarchical and patriarchal and women's status is subordinate in this hierarchy while the men are considered superior to women.

Women's position is theoretically protected under the constitution, but traditional norms and behavior restrict women's access to resources and services (Tasnim, 2011). Indigenous women are not exception of it. Different kinds of indigenous people live in Bangladesh. Among them Manipuri, Garo, Khasis, Lusai, Kuki, Hajong, Santal are the main. They are living both in hilly and plain land in different parts of our country. They are still in the marginal position and deprived of all human rights as well as isolated from the mainstream of the country. No women of any other community are as much hardworking and diligent as Manipuri women. Manipuri woman is the harbinger of future woman. The Manipuri women contribute a lot to our national economy as well as to support the demand of their family. Handicrafts weaving started primarily for fulfillment of family needs. Later on when crafts work developed as a profession for certain groups of people, the idea of commercialization and marketing of the products as a means of economy entered the field (Shyam Sunder, 1991).

But they are not getting any recognition of it and even they are treated inhumanly and exploited in every aspect both in family and society. However, conducting of this study in this specific area is both challenging and interesting as well. The income of Manipuri women provides a major contribution to the economic resources of Manipuri family. Manipuri women's contribution to household works is a major asset to their family.

In the remote villages, they render physical labour in the paddy fields which provides the extra manpower in cultivating the paddy fields. They carry bundles of paddy by harvesting themselves. They work till sunset in the field.

Manipuri women do household works by themselves, as no maiden servant is usually kept. In urban areas, they weave traditional cloth and fishing nets, which are marketed by themselves. Generally old-age women or widows who have not other earning members in the family do market it (Mohen, 2005). However, the Manipuri women are deprived and discriminated in all aspects of life within and outside their community.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

This study focuses on several objectives. These objectives have helped the research to be conducted successfully. The main or broad objective of the study is to find out the level and causes of gender discrimination in the Manipuri community in Bangladesh.

To fulfill the broad objective, the research has specified the following objectives:

1. To identify the nature of awareness among Manipuris regarding the existing gender discrimination in their community;
2. To provide an opportunity for sharing specific and common experiences of Manipuri women within their social context;
3. To explore the nature of participation of Manipuri women in socio-political and economic sectors, especially their access to resources, services and income generating activities;

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The quality of a research mostly depends on research questions because the relevant questions help the researcher to achieve the actual objective of the research. If the research questions are precise and clear, then the viability and credibility of the research work will be authentic to the researcher, respondents, and readers as well. To conduct the research successfully, the following questions have been raised:

1. Whether and how is gender discrimination remaining in Manipuri community of Bangladesh?
2. What are the underlying causes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community?
3. What are the strategies to overcome the existing gender discrimination and to attach them in the mainstream development of Bangladesh?

### **1.7 Research design**

A scientific and systematic research design is mandatory for a research to attain a valid conclusion and fulfill its objectives. Research design is a blue print or detailed plan for how a research study is to be conducted- operationalizing variables so they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest to study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses, and analyzing the results (Grinnell, Jr., 1997). It depicts the procedure of performing the research work step by step.



### 1.7.1 Methodology

Research methodology helps the researcher to find out the way of solving research problems systematically. It is an exploratory research. Pure ethnographic - qualitative study has been conducted in order to meet the research objectives. To validate research data, methodological triangulation is applied for the collection of field data. An in depth interview guide, focus group discussions and observation have been considered in this study as the most important and befitting data collection tools which have enabled the researcher to have more direct and practical knowledge from participating in the life situation of Manipuri community to understand and paint the real picture of discrimination prevailing among them.

#### 1.7.1. a Why it is ethnographic?

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz first introduced the term 'ethnography' in his book "*The Interpretation of Cultures*" (1973) to analyze the interpretive theory of culture in the early 1970's. He defined the term as "thick description". The term 'ethnography' is closely related with qualitative research where the main purpose of the researcher is to explain the everyday life experience in details. This type of research makes a clear distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. "Ethnographers generate understandings of culture through representation of what we call an *emic* perspective, or what might be described as the 'insider's point of view'. The emphasis in this representation is thus on allowing critical categories and meanings to emerge from the ethnographic encounter rather than imposing these from existing models. An *etic* perspective by contrast, refers to a more distant, analytical orientation to experience. An ethnographic understanding is developed through close exploration of several sources of data. Using this data sources as a foundation, the ethnographer relies on a cultural frame of analysis" (Hoey, 2014).

An ethnographic approach is used to describe and interpret the culture, group or social system that offers the researcher an opportunity to learn the process of behavior, customs, and way of life (Creswell, 1998 in Hossain, 2013: 65). Ethnography helps the researcher to conduct studies on any cultural group in a natural setting over a period of time through acquiring knowledge, practical experience and primary observational data (Creswell, 1998).

The researcher has used this approach as it is flexible and covers the whole range of realities to explore the entire life events ( LeCompte and Schensul, 1999 in Creswell, 2003) and as it attempts to explore a detailed an in-depth description of daily life practices of any community or organization.

#### **1.7.1.b Why it is Exploratory?**

Many research works have been conducted by different social scientists on Manipuri community of Bangladesh, especially on their culture, food habit, housing pattern, religion and history of settlement. However, most of the researcher ignores the gender issues among Manipuri community.

Hence, the number of gender related books, article, and other documents is very limited and rare. “Social issues that draw the attention of the researcher are in many cases unique and there are not enough past evidences or incidental references to form a research question” (Aminuzzaman, 2011) is called exploratory research. This type of study provides opportunity for further research works on this issue from different angles. This study also provides new understandings, new dimensions, and new experiences for future researchers.

#### **1.7.2 Approaches of the study**

This study has been conducted based on qualitative approach. “Qualitative research helps the researcher to understand behavior and institutions by getting to know the persons involved and their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and emotions” (Nachmias, 1997: ). A qualitative research seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants.

##### **1.7.2. a Why it is Qualitative?**

Qualitative data have been applied in the view that it has much to offer in research into holistic understanding of discrimination between men and women in Manipuri community as global development problem. Todlock, 2000, (in Uddin, 2013) says that qualitative research provides information in a particular but meaningful context and this method is also suitable to policy context. Qualitative research helps the researcher to reach holistic understanding of the research issue, and also helps to explore and understand deep experiences, attitudes, perceptions and interactions of the respondents real life situation (Islam, 2008 in Assraf 2016).

The researcher has conducted qualitative research to provide freedom of individuals, sharing their stories, hearing their voices and minimizing the gap between the researcher and the participants. Qualitative research makes the researcher for better understandings the environment so that the participants easily can address the problem or issue (Creswell, 2007). “Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world, studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them( Denzin and Lincoln in Aminuzzaman, 2011: 48).

In a qualitative approach, the researcher gets opportunity to use their knowledge and skills from constructivist view to acquire different meanings of individual experiences (Creswell, 2003). Hence, the researcher has obtained information, experiences and voices from Manipuri community regarding discrimination through claiming knowledge from different perspectives. The researcher attempted to examine the nature and causes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community; and their values, beliefs, custom, attitudes, emotions and feelings towards gender discrimination. The researcher suggested some ways from her personal experience and observation to ensure gender equality in Manipuri society.

### **1.7.3 Description of research area**

At present Manipuri people are living only in four different districts (Habiganj, Moulvibazar, Sylhet Sadar and Sunamganj) of Sylhet division of Bangladesh. So the researcher has selected Sylhet division as the study area. Sylhet division is located in the north eastern part of Bangladesh.

The table below shows the district-wise Manipuri settlement in Sylhet division:

Districts	Thanas	Villages	
Sylhet	Sylhet Sadar	1. Amborkhana 3. Shibgonj 5. Kewapara 7. Baghbari 9. Lamabazar 11. Rajbari	2. Nayabazar 4. Goaipara 6. Sagordighirpar 8. Lala dighir par 10. Doxingach 12. Noyahazar 13. Broonathtila
Moulvibazar	Kulaura	1. Photiguli 3. Naldhari	2. Goalbari 4. Boroitoli 5. Vandari Gaon
	Srimongol	1. Ramnagar 3. Balishira	2. Khaspur
	Borolekha	1. Gournagar 3. Chotodhamai	2. Puthadhor 4. Patharia 5. Gourangahil
	Kamalgonj	1. Madhobpur 3. Homerjan 5. Shangaon 7. Sripure 9. Chitlia 11. Ganganagar 13. Katabil 15. Tatevmon	2. Chaiciri 4. Majhergaon 6. Haqtiarkhola 8. Bhandsrigaon 10. Noyapattan 12. Bhanubil 14. Konagaon 16. Monolpur
Habiganj	Chunarughat	1. Gaborkhula 3. Shibnagar	2. Abadgaon 4. Dudhpatil 5. Soyosri
Sunamganj	Chatak	1. Dhonitila	2. Baro Gaon 3. Ratanpur

**Figure 2:** Present Manipuri inhabited areas in Bangladesh

Source: Oral information obtained from Manipuri people

#### 1.7.4 Population

Due to lack of updated and reliable data, the accurate number of Bangladeshi Manipuri is doubtful. However, at present the total number of Manipuri is about one lack and fifty thousands (Chowdhury, 2009) in Bangladesh. As this study has been conducted on Bangladeshi Manipuri, so all the Manipuri people living in Sylhet division are considered as research population.

#### 1.7.5 Sample and Sampling Method

Each individual Manipuri of Bangladesh has been considered as unit of analysis of this research. Purposive sampling is employed to select the sample. It is a non-probability sampling that helps the researcher to select sampling units subjectively in attempt to obtain a sample that appears to be representative of the total population (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1997).

Based on the given principles of qualitative research given by Miles and Huberman (1994) the researcher has selected three villages purposively, where the Manipuri community settles. It is important to mention that Manipuri community only lives in four districts of Sylhet division in Bangladesh which is already revealed in previous table 2. Usually all the Manipuri people live in Sylhet division, so purposive sampling is convenient to select the research areas and representatives from a large population.

#### **1.7.6 Sources of Data**

Data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data have been collected from field observation, in depth interview, and focus group discussion with the respondents. Secondary data meaning document study (Hodson, 1999) collected from different published materials like books, articles, library, daily newspapers, education and research institutions and reports by academics and regular internet surfing also maintained to serve the purpose of the study, as well as to support the raw data collected from field.

#### **1.7.7 Methods of data collection**

At the rudimentary stage of data collection, the researcher has to make a decision incorporating participatory approaches as the central tenet of data-collection. To meet this demand, three data collection methods employed for this research:

1. Participant Observation
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
3. In depth Interview

##### **1.7.7. a Participant Observation:**

This study is mainly based on participant observation method of social research. Observation method is carefully applied in order to trace the norms, values, custom, race and practices of the Manipuri people. The participant observation is an attempt to put both observer and observed on the same side by making them a member of the group so that he can experience what the experience and work within their frame of reference (Wilkinson. and Bhandarker, 1984). Through this method the researcher collects qualitative material by actually taking part in whatever activities and way of life, of the observed population (Aminuzzaman, 2011). Here, the researcher actively participates in the daily life of the Manipuri people who are being studied.

She watches events as they occur, reactions of the members to those events, their behavior at the time of occurrence of the events etc., and interacts with them as naturally as possible. “The assumption is that the reality can be better comprehended through such a total involvement” (Sufian, 2009:97). At the time of staying in the field, the researcher closely observed the life events and situation of Manipuri community related to discrimination between male and female. Participant observation helps the researcher to make a comparison between the information of the respondents at the time of in depth interview and the observed situation.

The Manipuri of Bangladesh is a distinct ethnic community. The unique nature of their livelihood, way of life, language and culture has a distinct character which is less similar to our national perspective. As a young Bangladeshi researcher, it was difficult for the researcher to conduct research on the Manipuri community- except through participant observation. With this method, the researcher gained a deeper appreciation of the group and its way of life and also gained different levels of insight by actually participating rather than only observing which was helpful to get more authentic picture of gender discrimination in Manipuri community.

#### **1.7.7. b Focus Group Discussion**

Focus Group discussion expands the possibility of constructing a dynamic, synergistic approach as the respondents can react to the responses of others (Islam, 2008).

Generally, FGD is a process of gaining information about a particular issue through interactions with the individuals living in a particular region having some common characteristics, organized by a moderator. A focus group is usually formed with six-ten members. In this study, each focus group was arranged with ten members. Focused Group discussion helps to understand their thinking about the issue; the reason of arising certain opinion; and the means of evaluating the discussion in line with research objectives. The researcher conducted two FGDs in residential areas of Manipuri community in (Vandari Gaon village of Moulvibazar district, and Soyosri village of Habiganj district).

#### **1.7.7.c In depth Interview**

In depth interview is an important technique of collecting qualitative information. It ensures confidential and secret discussion between the researcher and the interviewee.

Through in depth interview, the researcher was able to gain deeper insight of the respondents' personal opinion regarding gender discrimination (i.e. violence, sexual harassment, eve teasing etc.) in Manipuri community. It also provides an opportunity to the researcher to explore deep-rooted, bitter, and sensitive experiences and information which are indeed an attempt to creating spaces for sharing their agony and emotions. The researcher conducted interview to the respondents at the leisure time in a natural surroundings, so that the researcher can get enough time and actual information in relaxed mood without hampering their natural settings. The researcher has purposively selected six females and four males from each of three Manipuri villages ( Vandari Gaon village of Moulvibazar, Soyosri village of Habiganj and Ambarkhana of Sylhet district) as sample. Finally, the sample size of this research was thirty (eighteen females, and twelve males) for the purpose of conducting in depth interview.

Name of District	Name of Thana	Name of Selected Village	Number of Selected Male	Number of Selected Female	Total Number of Selected Respondents
Sylhet	Sylhet Sadar	Amborkhana	4	6	10
Moulvibazar	Kulaura	Vandari Gaon	4	6	10
Habiganj	Chunarughat	Soyosri	4	6	10
Total Sample	4	4	12	18	30

**Table-1:** Sample Size of in depth interview

The researcher emphasized especially on female respondents, as the main focus of this study is on the women's experiences, sufferings and subordination. Hence, in collecting information and qualitative material through in depth interview, the number of female respondents was high compared to male respondents. Here the researcher used "Interview Checklist" or "Interview Protocol" containing open-ended questionnaire.

For every respondent it took one to one and half hours of conversation. The conversation was recorded with their informed consent.



**Researcher is interviewing a Manipuri male**

The interview was conducted in bangle, as most of the Manipuris do not know English; even the olders are not used to associate with Bangla. They used Manipuri language while talking within their community. They rarely talk with the people of other community. The younger and current generation knows both Bangla and Manipuri language. Hence, five Manipuri female students and two male students worked as “Gate Keepers” of this study to enter easily and communicate with their community. They firstly introduced the researcher with the *Panchayet Headman* of their community, and then the Headman permitted me to talk with them. One head from each three Manipuri villages (who is the resident and leader figure of respective village) has been managed for sacrificing his time with the researcher which helped the researcher to get easy access to their community and trust of the respective participants.

At the rudimentary stage of my collecting data, the Manipuri women and girls closed the door while they saw me in the yard. It took a long time to be free and introduced with them. At present they call me to meet with them, and sometimes they visit my home due to having a close interaction with them.

### **1.7.8 Data Processing and Analysis**

Field data and information have been collected through different qualitative data collection methods, i.e. observation, in-depth interview and FGDs from the respondents.



Some video short were also taken at the time of field observation on the basis of their permission, as it an important tool for collecting ethnographic information (Creswell, 2003). The researcher took field notes and recorded the voice of the respondents and then organized them by making transcriptions based on the sources of information. As, they provided information both in Bangla and Manipuri language, the researcher carefully transcribed them in Bangla with the help of some Manipuri students, who are experts in their own language, Bangla and English. The researcher, then cross-check the information with each other.

The researcher carefully read the transcriptions more than two times, and selected the themes that are analyzed in details relating to the objectives and research questions. The description involves broad explanation about the selected people, places and events, as case study and ethnographic research involve a detailed description of the setting or individual, followed by analysis of the data for themes or issues (Stake, 1995 in Creswell, 2003: 191). I have generated some quotes of the respondents' conversation, as it is used in qualitative and ethnographic research.

### **1.7.9 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized with seven chapters. Introductory section contains study background, significance, research objectives and nature of inquiry.

Second chapter consists of reviewing a number of relevant literatures to better understanding the term, and to develop conceptual as well as theoretical frame work.

In third chapter I have designed theoretical and conceptual framework with operationalization of the issues.

The fourth chapter is consisted of two parts: in first part the history of Manipuri settlement and the present location of Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh are discussed in detailed. The second part contains ethnographic profile of Manipuri community i.e. physical features, housing patterns, involvement in liberation war, language, religion and different festivals, indigenous games and cultural aspects.

The fifth chapter is developed with special emphasis on causes, nature, and pattern of gender discrimination in Bangladesh.

Here the researcher showed how different factors of male domination and patriarchy enhance and perpetuate women's subordination in our society. The sixth chapter focuses on the details of the findings and discussion of the study with justification of the objectives and research questions. The researcher also discussed here the ways of relating the theoretical propositions with the findings. Finally, in the last chapter, I have offered the concluding remarks with some policy recommendations on the basis of the problems found in the study.

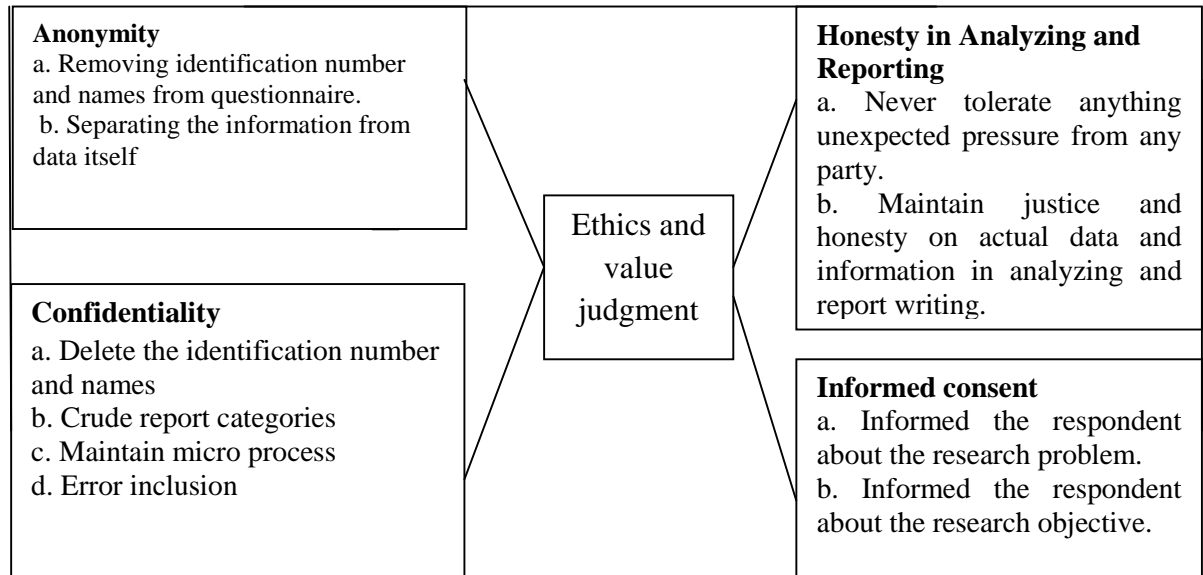
#### **1.7.10 Ethical consideration and value Judgment**

This study has been conducted maintaining ethical guidelines of the social research association. The objectives and purposes of this study were clearly expressed to the individuals involved. The researcher was very careful about the protection of respondents' basic rights and other activities related to the respondents physical and psychological matter. The note taking and voice recording both video and tape while collecting information were done with the consent of the respondents. The researcher also very much concerned with the confidentiality, ensuring their right to anonymity would be upheld. Social sciences are scientific and humanities disciplines and social scientists are the observers as well as participants in the research process from beginning to end. Value judgment is referred to a judgment based on a particular set of values or a particular set of value system (Sufian, 2009: 5).

The study has been value laden, as the researcher has emphasized on her personal values and judgment for the greater interest of the Manipuri community. This study tries to explore the gender relations of an indigenous community, so the researcher closely interacted with them and their daily activities.

Researcher followed value free dogma to free the results of analysis from personal justification, because such biasness may vitiate or influence the research result. Conducting this research work, the researcher constantly interacted with a complex and demanding socio-political environment that may influence the research decisions both formally and informally.

For coping with these influences, the researcher has maintained code of ethics of social research in every step for avoiding extreme value and ethical problem. It can be shown through the following figure:



**Figure 3:** Ethical Consideration in Social Research

### 1.8 Conclusion

The researcher is firmly committed to do her best to successfully conduct the research in line with established ethics of research. Women are the half of our total population. So, without equal participation of women in development process, it is impossible to achieve millennium development goals (MDGs). Manipuri women are also the citizen of Bangladesh, so they should be equally treated equally in line with our mainstream population without making any distinction. If the male psychological and social attitude or perception towards women is changed and the Manipuri women get equal rights with the male in every walk of life within their community, then the discriminatory situations will be removed and our society will be progressed into a more equitable and discrimination free society. Manipuri women are more hard-working in household and outside work and contributing to our national economy through weaving hand looms; and now it is familiar as a renowned small handicraft in our country. This study will meet the academic demands as well as greater benefit of the society. It will attract our policy makers, donors, NGOs, and civil society as well. However, the researcher thinks that the research findings would be a guideline to bring greater benefit for the Manipuri women, as well as the Manipuri community.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**REFLECTION FROM RELEVANT**  
**LITERATURE**

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Reflection from Relevant Literature

The issue of gender discrimination in indigenous community has come out in recent years, and that is why the information is rarely available on various patterns. A number of books and documents related to the study have been reviewed for the purpose of better understanding the term. These are as follows:

*If a woman can cook  
so can a man,  
because a woman does not cook with her  
womb!*

What follows from this is that the different status women and men enjoy in society is indeed socially and culturally determined; it is man-made, nature has very little to do with it. It is gender not sex which has determined that, (almost) every where, women as a group are considered inferior to men. They enjoy fewer rights, control fewer resources, work longer hours than men but their work is either undervalued, or underpaid. They face systematic violence at the hands of men and society; and they have little decision-making power in social, economic and political institutions. Men are considered to be the heads of households, bread-winners, owners and managers of property, and active in politics, religion, business and the professions. Women on the other hand are expected and trained to bear and look after children, to nurse the infirm and old, do all household work, and so on. However the degree of differentiation between male and female roles varies widely. Not only education and overall modernization or development can bring in equality between men and women in our society. Actually patriarchy is one of the most important reasons of gender inequalities and subordination of women (Bhasin, 2003).

**The Meithei is one of the oldest literatures on Manipuri which was published in early 1900s.** The writer collected important anthropological information on the Manipuri's at the period of his office in the state of Manipuri as an assistant political agent of British government. Since the advent of orthodox Hinduism, the Meitheis are claiming descent from Arjuna, one of the pandavas.

In all certainty before the coming of Christianity to the hills and Hinduism to the plains, both the hill people and Meitheis were animists.

The food and drink habits of the Meitheis were once like the wild Nagas' of the hill. They have suffered greatly because of successive waves of foreign invasions, first by the Burmese and later by British and the Japanese during the Second World War. Due to two main factors, namely lack of political maturity and poor relationship between the hills and the valley, Manipur has had as many as three spells of presidential rule during a short span of ten years. Dealing with their traditions folk-tales of Meitheis and their linguistic affinities it will be found to contain a mass of new and interesting matter. Nearly every house wife in Manipuri society is capable of weaving the needed cloths of the family and agricultural work as well (Hudson, 1908). Although this book is regarded as the master piece, the book was written on the basis of Meithei population in the state of Manipur and it was an anthropological explanation that exposed a little on the several problems and difficulties of the group. In courses of time many changes have taken places in this regard. Due to migration from the state of Manipur, the people have become marginalized in many spares of their life. Besides globalization, technology, education, connection with urban areas, influence of majority population of Bangladesh etc. have brought remarkable changes among the Meitheis than the era of Hudson.

**In Bangladesh about 2.5 million indigenous people of forty five different distinct** communities are living throughout the country commonly known as “Adivasis” by themselves. Among them the Manipuri is one of the Adivasi communities living mainly in Sylhet and Moulovibazar districts of the country, having migrated from the Manipur State of India. They are dispersed in small pockets of settlements that are surrounded by areas inhabited by Bengali speaking people. So, they experience unequal treatment and are the subordinate groups whose members have significantly less control or power over their own lives than the members of the majority groups have over theirs. In Bangladesh there are lots of problems they encounter during their everyday life. They do not have direct representation at national policy making and planning levels. Poverty and landlessness is increasing at alarming rate and it has become a threat to their ancestral agriculture based livelihood. They are more or less subject to systematic discrimination in different aspects including education, employment, development activities and social relations. This is largely because policy initiatives have not addressed the specific needs of this group.

Although the government and a few international development agencies have initiated some programs mainly addressing the needs of indigenous communities in Chittagong Hill tracts region, Manipuri community is still largely ignored by the government's development activities like other plain land indigenous communities throughout the country. They are still left behind the mainstream development. Manipuri community is dominated by males and the majority of household heads are male. Both males and females involve themselves in earning activities and do agricultural work. Especially handloom work is a dominant occupation of the Manipuris mainly done by female with child caring (Ahmed & Singh, 2007). But the writers overlook the different dimensions of discrimination against Manipuri women within and outside the community.

**It is striking to mention that a large chunk of female suffer from malnutrition, especially in the case of child-bearing mothers.** Manipuri female's health status deteriorates after only child birth. The knowledge about the use of modern health-care and balanced diet is very poor among them. Thus a large portion of women faces drastic health complications. Manipuri women are treated and governed by the religious or social rules of law. The social rules treat women differently from men and generally as a subordinate. They are still deprived of their rights. Whenever a wife goes, she is bound to take prior permission from her husband first and next from the head of the family. This results to strict maintenance of guardianship of men over women. When any family dispute arises within husband and wife, generally husband's decision or settlement is final; a wife can never cross the limits defined by her husband. A few women have the knowledge of their legal rights. This is the principal drawback in availing themselves of the equal facilities with men within the society. Manipuri women's contribution to household works is a major asset to their family. They render physical labor in the paddy fields which provides the extra manpower in cultivating and harvesting the paddy. No women of any other community are as much hard working and diligent as Manipuri women. They weave cloths and fishing nets which are marketed by themselves. Sometimes the birth of a daughter causes worry than the birth of a son. The son is not accountable for his duties to the family; but daughter is, for all cases accountable to the parents. The gender prejudice against women remains a stigma. It is generally found in a traditional Manipuri family that, a housewife usually takes less and last her food which she had been trained up by her mother and other elders in her childhood family (Mohen, 2005).

**In Manipuri marriage ceremony, Fingaruk (a basket made of bamboo, cane full of cake and sweets)** is carried by the women who has already given birth her first child male. A belief goes in Manipuri community that the women are a symbol of fortune. Manipuri women are usually hard working and in some cases they are more active than male. Apart from accomplishing the household chores, they contribute in out door activities such as agriculture, harvesting, sowing, etc. equally with the male. Men particularly plough the land while women sow the seeds. They carry the bundles of ripen rice and harvest by themselves. They work till sunset in the field. Manipuri women do household tasks by themselves although they hail either from high class family or low class; as no maiden servant is kept. In urban areas, they weave ‘Phanek’<sup>3</sup> - (like lungi), “Innafi”<sup>4</sup> - (orna), Younkham<sup>5</sup>, bed sheet, shari, table cloth, side bag and fishing net for their family needs as well as marketing (Sheram, 1996). Being a Manipuri, the writer overlooks the gender issue remaining in Manipuri society.

**Though women constitute nearly 50% of the population of Bangladesh, their situation has traditionally been adversed.** In Bangladesh, women bear many of the marks of a “disadvantaged minority” in the social, political and economic realms. The traditional society of Bangladesh is permeated with patriarchal values and norms of female subordination, subservience, subjugation and segregation. Women are found at the bottom rung of poverty, illiteracy, and land lessness. Women are the most affected by negative impacts resulting from discrimination at birth leading to deprivation of access to all opportunities and benefits in family and societal life. Inheritance laws, social structure, custom and prejudices ensure that land is predominately in male hands. Women are the “poorest of the poor” and are the major actors in the fight for survival. Women are lagging behind men in all stages of education. At present the labour force participation rate for female is 50% as compared to male which is 78%. However the employment concentration of women remains in sectors of low productivity such as in agriculture, petty trade and social services.

In our country women are more disadvantaged than men in terms of access to health care and quality of nutrition and health care received which results maternal mortality, pregnancy and maternity complications.

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<sup>3</sup> A soft cloth usually used by Male at home

<sup>4</sup> Similar to Orna, which women and girls used with their dress

<sup>5</sup> Long towel, used by both male and female



Violence against women has become a common phenomenon. Rape, murder, acid throwing, trafficking in women and children, repression at home and outside, violence and murder for dowry have increased at alarming rate. The position of women in politics and administration is not satisfactory. Our national policy regarding the advancement of women and different international conference's foresightness are not adopted and implemented properly for various complexities. But women's position is gradually developing in our country (**Mahtab, 2007**).

**Patriarchy is a concept which we experienced in our daily lives and which explained women's subordination.** Patriarchy generally refers to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system where by women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. The nature of patriarchy is different in different classes in the same society; in different societies, and in different periods in history. The broad principles remain the same, i.e., men are in control, but the nature of this control may differ. Normally the following areas of women's lives can be said to be under patriarchal control –women's productive or labor power, reproduction sexuality, mobility, property and other economic resources. The family, media, religion, the law are the pillars of a patriarchal system and structure. The main institution in society shows that they are all patriarchal in nature. In general men hold power in all the important institutions of a patriarchal society; this does not imply women are totally powerless – the problem is with the framework itself, and the framework is determined by men. Women also support the rule of men. Without their cooperation patriarchy would not exist. Women are very much part of the system, they have internalized patriarchal values, they are not free of patriarchal ideology, and they obviously derive some benefits from it too. Some theories regarding the origin of patriarchy are – the traditionalist view of patriarchy, Engels explanation of the origin of patriarchy, Radical feminist and revolutionary feminist explanations, the socialist feminist explanation (**Bhasin, 1993**).

**The Adivasis of Bangladesh (i.e., the Santals, the Oraons, the Garo, Mandi, the Bawms, the Khyangs, the Tripuras, The Marmas, the Tanchangyas, the Chaks, the Manipuris)** demonstrate unique cultures. Their diverse cultures, languages and traditions contribute significantly to make Bangladesh a culturally rich country. The Manipuris inhabit the North-eastern districts of Sylhet, Moulovibazar, Sunamgonj and Habiganj in Bangladesh.

Historians believe that the Manipuris are the original inhabitants of the Indian state of Manipur in the Northeast. Political incidents, war with Burma, annexation by the British colonists, etc. led the Manipuris to migrate to different places in India and Bangladesh. They came to this country presumably between 1819 and 1826. The Manipuris are divided into two main groups: Vishnupryia and Meitei.

The two groups have language differences too. A section of Manipuris of Bangladesh are Muslims known as Pangon. Their language and physical feature are similar to those of the Meitei. Ancient religious beliefs are presented through the Manipuri dance. The Rush is the biggest festival of Manipuris. They also celebrate Ratha Jatra, Poush Sangkranti, Dole Jatra and Chaitra Sangkranti. Generally, the Manipuri dance is divided into two main groups- folk dance and classical dance. In Manipuri dances, the main musical instruments used are dhakgo, mandira, harmonium, flute, violin, tanpura, khanjane, sitar, moipang, etc. (Saha, 2008). Though the writer discussed the origin, culture and classes of Manipuri society, he did not mention the position and functions of male and female in the respective society.

**Except Garo and Khasis all indigenous communities in Bangladesh are patriarchal in nature.** Indigenous women are more active than male in agriculture. Though women do equal work with man outside the home, their burden of household work never be dwindled. They often go to work holding their babies on their backs with a piece of cloth. It reveals their distressed and wretchedness in society. It demonstrates very easily and seems as a normal fact in which entrusted the picture of undisclosed gender politics. Although in gender division of labor women's work is not confined within private sector, all indigenous women are in a subordinated position in their respective community. Indigenous women are exploited and their subordinate position in society is ideological. This inferiority is determined by the predominating opinion of patriarchy and they are subordinate within both social and capitalist structure. First one indicates the dignity and status of men in family and second one is responsible for the women's marginal position in society. Poor indigenous women are more discriminated than Bengali women, because they have to face discrimination in case of class, community, race, caste, religion and women as well.

They are disadvantaged in every sphere of life. Now-a-days in the gradual termination of the capitalist system they introduced them selves as a chief labour to the state and sometimes craving sexual ornaments to the military.

Sexual harassment to indigenous women in the hills:

1993	–	Rape	–	5	–	military.
1994	–	Rape	–	4	–	military.
1995	–	Rape	–	12	–	military.
1996	–	Rape	–	1	–	military.

But unfortunately the state does not take any action as per the rules against that characterless and inhuman military. So, military are often making masks of ghoulishness and apprehension on the back of the indigenous women ( **Nasrin, 2003**).

**Some hundred years ago the Manipuris were migrated to Sylhet from Manipur.**

From the linguistic point of view the Manipuris living in Bangladesh are divided into two classes, namely the Bishnupriya and the Meithei. Both the sections possess the same culture and religion. People of one section take part in festivals, marriage ceremony and cultural functions of the other section. A housewife of a Manipuri family sacrifices herself to her household works. She is from a very early age, taught the traditional values and the virtue of making sacrifice. Women and men are treated differently in according to social customary law. If the housewife adjudged guilty of an offence in family life, then the husband divorces her getting back all the ornaments and dress given to the wife. But in case of husband's fault the wife may leave him getting nominal existence of compensation or continue the relationship by tolerating all the misdeeds. In a patriarchal Manipuri society women have no right to property; the son's acquire all the property inheritedly. Women in all ages outside of the agriculture and household task are involved in handloom weaving to meet the family needs and at present in marketing the products to afford the family better. Title of name differs also on the basis of gender in (Bishnupriya) Manipuri society i.e. male used singha and sinha for women. They have a rich culture and they are inspired by patriotism. During the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, a number of Manipuri men and women sacrifice their lives for the sake of mother land (**Singha, 2007**).

*“Human development, if not engendered, is fatally endangered”*  
(Mahbub ul Haq, the founder of the Human Development Centre)

During the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the situation of South Asian Women was one of the bleakest faced by women in any part of the world.

That bleak scenario, remarkable in itself, was all the more depressing given that, as the Beijing Conference began in 1995, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as the President of Sri Lanka, were all women. These countries were headed by women who proclaimed their whole hearted support for gender equality. However, women in South Asia remain far behind men in enjoying basic human rights, let alone in participating on an equal footing with men in educational institutions, the job market or in government.

Women in South Asia may work from dawn to dusk, but their economic contribution is scarcely acknowledged at the national level and their access to health, educational and other facilities lags far behind that of men. South Asia has both the lowest literacy rates and the largest gap between the rates of male and female literacy. Discrimination against South Asian women begins at, or even before, birth. Female foeticide and infanticide, neglect of health, and gender-biased feeding practices combined with heavy work burdens, all are manifestations of son preference and the patriarchal structures which prevail across the region. As the majority of South Asian women work in the informal sector and as unpaid family helpers, their work goes unrecognized in national systems of accounting. Women's political representation is very low in South Asia: only 7% of South Asian parliamentarians are women. South Asian Women's real GDP per capita at US\$874 is lower than any other region in the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa. Gender discrimination in South Asia is situated within deeply ingrained systems of patriarchy which limit and confine women to subordinate roles. Gender biases are held not only by men but also by women. Women are often convinced that the work they do for their family is their duty and as such women do not expect any recognition, monetary or otherwise; while the work that men do is truly valuable, both socially and economically. Similarly, many women do not participate in decision making, believing it to be the realm of men. Attitude shifts in society as a whole are required to break out of this culture of patriarchy, and this is why the gender question is not just one about women, but about both women and men and how they interact. The accomplishments and the persistent challenges and policy gaps remaining since the Beijing Conference are detailed here. Although over the past five years, the practice of developing National plans for Action has fostered increased understanding of women's rights and status, very little progress has been achieved in matters of substance rather than those of process, with discriminatory laws still on the books, protective laws weakly enforced and social-sector budgets remaining severely inadequate.

Invisibility of women in the economy is a worldwide phenomenon, but in South Asia its impact on women is pernicious. The overall lack of gender-related development in South Asia and the problems faced by the region's women are in particular fields such as in the economy, in the legal system, in education, in health and in government. Underlying the inequalities faced by women in all those arenas is one fundamental dilemma. Legislation has codified male privilege, women remain unable to gain equal access to inheritance or property and face other restrictions - from "purdah"<sup>6</sup> to so-called honor killings - that effectively maintain their invisibility in society as a whole while subjecting them to terror and to violations of their basic human rights. Similarly, the ingrained preference for boys ensures that girls do not have the same access to education; that they do not receive the same level of nutrition; or the same consideration in the political sphere. Invisibility in this case become the recipe for exclusion and therefore for the maintenance of continued inequality. A gendered division of labour reinforces unequal and discriminatory practices. Although women perform some of the heaviest, dirtiest and most labour-intensive work, much of that labour remains invisible as it occurs either within the household or in the unregulated informal-sector. Ultimately, the Report proposes that women's labour be included in systems of national accounting. Women have a right to equal recognition, opportunity, and compensation; the continued economic marginalization of women and their work retards the economic progress of the region. The legal system as it is practiced in the region is heavily biased against women and often victimizes rather than protects them. The importance of legal protection for women is tied to their awareness of their own rights and indeed to education in general. Despite some improvements, South Asia continues to lag far behind the developing world in providing equal educational opportunities for women. Three out of every five south Asian women are illiterate. Educational opportunities for girls vary dramatically between urban and rural areas and among different states and provinces. In some cases, the problems stem from a shortage of female teachers; in others, from the shortage of single sex schools or from the distances required to travel to school. But the bottom line remains that, at an early age, girls in South Asia continue to face barriers to obtaining an education, which worsen at every level through to higher education and most types of vocational and technical education. The vast majority of South Asian women lack even the most rudimentary health facilities, resulting in high maternal and infant mortality rates. Women's access to health is scarcely better.

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<sup>6</sup> Vail for girls or women

An estimated 2, 08, 000 women die each year in South Asia due to pregnancy and birth-related complications. Meanwhile South Asian girls and women continue to lack what they need for basic nutrition, with a majority of women in the region suffering from chronic energy deficit because of their in taking low calorie as per daily requirements. In South Asia, women's inequality begins at birth, with the ratio of women to men abnormally low compared to the rest of the world. Excluding south Asia, the ratio of females to males in the world is 106 to 100; in South Asia, it is only 94 to 100, a discrepancy suggesting that 79 million women are simply missing - never born, or dying of chronic malnutrition, or never receiving medical care. Discrimination in all the areas has resulted in invisibility of women in governance structures and in decision making bodies.

Even when women lead political parties, they face tokenism and exclusion from certain portfolios - such as finance, defense and foreign affairs - that are still male bastions. The largest concentration of female civil servants throughout South Asia is in the social sectors like health and education. The role of civil society in increasing women's participation in public life is one of the few positive factors amidst the general gloom. Civil society initiatives have helped to organize women and to create awareness on a range of issues from health to education to basic rights. A significant number of women work for civil society organizations, either on a voluntary basis or as paid employees. The role of trade unions has been less positive. They have failed to organize working women, with only a small minority actually joining unions.

Women's employment-related issues and concerns are usually not a priority within the unions. The overall picture is one of overlapping and complementary forms of exclusion. Because the traditionalism of South Asian cultural and religious practices is enshrined in legal codes, measures which discriminate against women are normalized in the legal sphere. Because such discrimination is seen as normal, the work women do - regardless of how much it actually contributes to South Asian societies - is uncounted and largely uncompensated. Because little monetary benefit is expected to result from women's labour, families spend less effort in feeding or educating girls, and governments offer few facilities to ensure that their schooling and health is on par with boys. Because mothers realize that their girl children will face such discrimination all their lives, many of them make the painful decision to abort the fetuses of girls rather than subject them to lives of hardship.

Ups and down the line, the network of invisibility, exclusion and inequality is constantly reinforced. The Report provides the framework of an agenda for women's complete equality with men in critical areas such as building capabilities through education, health and providing economic and political opportunities. The agenda identifies achieving gender equality in at least four areas as imperative from the point of view of sustainable economic growth, human development and gender equity. These are: equality under the law, equality in access to capability building, equality in economic opportunity, and equality in governance. Each South Asian country must formulate and implement its own agenda for the equality of women with men. This is a sine qua non for both development and peace in the region; and to implement the agenda for women's equality, it is imperative that strong and dedicated institutional structures be in place at the national as well as global levels - South Asians, both men and women must break the shackles of gender inequality and free themselves from centuries of patriarchy. Otherwise, the years ahead will be just as desolate for millions upon millions of South Asians as those that followed the end of colonialism, with true freedom and prosperity still out of reach (**Human Development in South Asia Report, 2000**).

**Religion is a personal and institutional reality in the lives of the majority of the population.** Whether one's experience come only in childhood or extends into adulthood, religious training and affiliation provide a significant context for many women as they address experiences of personal violence and victimization. This context is often dramatically shaped by the institutional presence of church, temple or mosque. Many people whether currently active in a particular religious group or not, will turn to their faith and religious leader in a time of crisis for support and for help in discerning the meaning of experience and in determining what action they should take. Regardless of the particular religious affiliation, a majority of women will be dealing with some aspect of a religious context alongside the trauma of the violence. Most of these women will find their religious group or leadership to be either helpful (a resource) or unhelpful (a roadblock) in their healing. Too often, the religious community has been a roadblock for victims and survivors. Many women have been abandoned by their faith communities, left to experience shame and guilt, whereas their perpetrators have had license to continue their abusive behavior. The final consequence of all of this has been the destruction of families and of individuals and an erosion of people's trust in their religious institutions.

Priests were urged to refer battered women and abusers to community agencies with the resources to help them. This was a major step forward in changing the institutional and cultural understanding of violence against women. The dominant cultural norms of western societies accept men's violence against women as normative, that is, just the way things are. The old adage<sup>7</sup>, "boys will be boys", although adamantly denied on the one hand, functions to explain and justify male behavior on the other. A theological norm is operative in this cultural framework as well. Theologically, our understanding of violence against women reflects our understanding of God and of the nature of people. God created two categories of people, victims and victimizers, and these categories are generally gender-specific. Western religious traditions are fundamentally patriarchal, and women and children are sacrificed in the worship of patriarchy. When we are victimized, we feel powerless and afraid. The understanding of sexual violence in the Christian tradition perpetuated a tendency to blame the victim and not to find the offender culpable for his actions.

Misogyny and the lack of accountability of men prevented religions from addressing the ethical or theological implications of rape. Women are viewed as "The devil's gateway". Protestant reformers used the framework of marriage as the context to assert women's subordination. The right to chastise enforced women's subordination in marriage. Unfortunately, various doctrines have been viewed as consistent with scriptures, interpreted to conform male dominance over women. Either by its silence or its instruction, the church has too often communicated to battered women that they should stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, and forgive and forget. To batterers, the church has communicated that their efforts to control their wives or girlfriends are justified because women are to be subject to men in all things. Men have been permitted to "discipline" their wives and their children, all for the "good of the family". Christian history is filled with examples of church leaders justifying abuse of women by men. Church fathers described their own physical violence toward their wives, without apology. Often primary responsibility for maintaining "shalom bayit"<sup>8</sup> has fallen to women, so that if there is disharmony (violence) in the home, it seen as her responsibility. In addition, shalom bayit has also served to hide the fact of violence behind the facade of a "peaceful home".

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<sup>7</sup> One type of proverb, which they strictly believe in.

<sup>8</sup> Peace at home



This public/private spilt has always been to the detriment of women who are victims of domestic violence. Within Islam, we also find texts and interpretations of texts that have been used by abusive men to justify their behavior. Actually, the texts have been used as a tool of control and abuse completely opposed to the Islamic foundation of marriage and family. The stated purpose in each of these traditions has been preservation of marriage and the family at any cost. The real purpose has been the preservation of male control of women and children within patriarchy. In dealing with domestic violence, the scriptural justifications for women remaining in abusive relationships (subordination in marriage, prohibition of divorce) must be considered in the fuller contexts of ethics, theology, and doctrine. Proof texting (the selective use of a text, usually out of context, to support ones position) is a common play by those who seek to justify their actions. It is not difficult to proof text a man's prerogative to dominate and control a woman within patriarchal religious traditions. We need to begin articulating a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for endurance. We must articulate a theology of empowerment rather than a theology of passive endurance.

This approach requires a critique (or deconstruction) of the roadblocks that can be created by patriarchal interpretations of religious teachings, as well as development (or reconstruction) of useful resources that empower victims and survivors to address their experiences. Thus, sexual and domestic violence must be understood theologically and ethically as sin, that is, as the physical, psychological, and spiritual violation of a person by another person; as such, it violates the bodily integrity of the victim and shatters any possibility of right relationship between the victim and abuser. Any form of personal violence can destroy trust in the other person (with an acquaintance or family member) or trust in the basic security of one's world (with a stranger). So, the secondary effect is to isolate or cut the victim off from her community. Within Western cultures today, to assert that sexual violence is unnatural and unacceptable runs counter to the dominant norms. Yet this assertion is consistent with the portrayal of God. Likewise, in the Quran, the marital relationship specifically is mandated to be one of "mutual kindness and mercy". It is also important to distinguish ethically between sexual violence and sexual activity, condemning the first and affirming the second. We must assert family values as the foundation of our work on domestic violence: respect, equality, freedom from fear, support, love, freedom from violence, responsibility for self and others. These values apply to our families, no matter how our family is described.

These values support and sustain healthy, just relationship devoid of violence and abuse. These are the values we learn from the Jewish teaching of shalom bayit and from the Quran in the framework for an Islamic marriage. A convicted wife abuser tried to use the first amendment protection of his religious beliefs to support his right to abuse his wife. Marital rape is another tragic example of an appeal to church doctrine to justify wife abuse. Religious doctrines and teaching significantly shape the values of our society, which determine our social and cultural norms. In spite of the powerful messages from the dominant culture that reinforce men's violence against women, our religious institutions have the potential to reframe the conversation and help to shift the community norms to respect women's bodily integrity and right to live free from fear in the home, school, workplace and on the street. Seminars are in a key position to prepare those in training for ministry to understand the issues of violence so that they can respond appropriately to victims, survivors, or perpetrators and take leadership in the community in raising the issue. Coursework in various areas (including scripture, history, theology, and pastoral care) can address violence against women. Clergy have access to public forums to raise public policy issues regarding direct services to women or changing social norms.

Congregations and clergy can build genuine, supportive relationships with local programs that address violence against women. Advocates should take steps to ensure that religious women are comfortable in their programs. They can also be sensitive to the particular needs of religious women by affirming their expression of those needs and helping them find the religious resources they need. Training is useful for identifying allies and building collaborative relationships with religious leaders in the community. Finally, we need collaboration between religious and secular resources, which truly focus on the needs and concerns of women who are victimized. This will, then, move us to suggest necessary institutional changes and to outline the possibilities for changing community norms to confront violence against women as a social problem. If we believe that the way things are is not the way they have to be, then we must join with our allies to ensure that violence against women becomes a peculiar, odd, and unusual occurrence in the 21st century (**Fortune, 2001**).

**Here, the main focus is on health intervention with battered women.** It reviews the empirical rationale for intervening and the barriers to doing so effectively. It also outlines interventions by individual clinicians, health care institutions, and communities, roughly paralleling the traditional public health division of tertiary, secondary, and primary prevention. Promising initiatives, policies and program models are described. As with other health problems that derive from complex social and behavioral process that lie outside traditional models of disease, successful health intervention depends on linking all three levels of response through collaborative efforts with social service, criminal justice, and community based providers, what is called a coordinated community purpose. The underlying theme is that health programs are likely to succeed when they normalize and mainstream clinical violence intervention. Normalization implies that work with battered women builds on the skills and patient education techniques clinicians successfully employ in other medical or behavioral health areas: smoking, child abuse, or sexually transmitted disease, for instance. Mainstreaming refers to making clinical violence intervention part of routine patient care. Given high rates of staff turnover at hospitals and community health centers, the institutionalization of domestic violence training is a critical component of mainstreaming. Mainstreaming also entails integrating sensitivity to partner abuse into the clinical response to a spectrum of medical and behavioral problems that can be caused or aggravated by battering.

Normally, the need for health service is determined by identifying the number of a new cases of a problem in the population (its incidence), the duration of a typical case, and how many people are suffering its effects at a given time (its prevalence). Problems can have a low incidence -for example, HIV<sup>9</sup> disease- and still pose major challenges to intervention because of their duration and serious effects. Confusion about whether to define a case of domestic violence by each abusive episode or women's continuing exposure to battering makes it difficult to agree on the incidence, prevalence, or duration of the problem in the general population. Without this basic information, it is impossible to accurately gauge the level of services needed to treat battered women, to say with certainty what portion of the population of battered women is being served, or to determine whether interventions are reducing the incidence or prevalence of the problem.

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<sup>9</sup> Human Immune deficiency Virus

Battered women used health resources in large numbers for injuries and for a range of other emergent and non-emergent problems linked to domestic violence. Abused women are often evasive and they disclose such abuse. Battered women are disproportionately represented among rape victims, homeless women, women who attempt suicide, alcoholics and drug users, mothers of abused children, psychiatric patients, and women with HIV disease. Injuries from domestic violence occur at every point in the life cycle. The typical victim of battering is a single, separated, or divorced young woman with a child. The hallmarks of abusive injuries are their sexual nature and their frequency.

Battered women are 13 times more likely than non-battered women to be injured in the breast, chest, and abdomen and three times as likely to be injured while pregnant. Woman battering is ongoing in the vast majority of cases dramatizes the ineffectiveness of current intervention. Instead of identifying domestic violence, clinicians respond inappropriately to battered women. Failure to recognize abuse has traditionally been accompanied by symptomatic treatment, which does little to address the underlying issue. In response to pain, headaches, multiple injuries, and somatic complaints, battered women disproportionately receive pain or sleep medications, anxiolytics, and frankly punitive referral to psychiatry or child protective service.

Instead of being viewed as a persistent help-seeker, the woman who returns multiple times to the medical clinic is typically misidentified as someone who is overusing health resources or using them inappropriately. In this situation, clinicians often resort to labels such as “frequent visitor”, “hypo chondriac”, or “hysterical” to validate their frustration and lack of intervention. These medical practices isolate the woman from further health resources, reinforce her isolation and validate the batterer's claim that she has the problem, not him when battered women develop drug, alcohol, or other problems in response to the stress that accompanies ongoing abuse, these are mistaken for their primary problem, and they are referred to treatment settings that are unresponsive to domestic violence and, therefore, ineffective in stopping the secondary problem. Over time, these interventions further entrap the abused patient and contribute to the escalation of battering, rather than to its resolution. Given this pattern of response, it is not surprising that battered women rate medical professionals the least effective among service providers.

In lieu of effective intervention, battering is likely to be a significant issue throughout the life course, evoking a range of no emergent, general medical and psychosocial problems, requiring repeated injury visits, and eliciting significant costs wherever and wherever women seek health care. To move health care into the mainstream of political and community life where domestic violence is unacceptable, prevention efforts must address both the substance of professional norms and their organizational context. At present, the elements of clinical interventions with battered women typically include identification and treatment of medical needs; assessment of service and mental health needs, clear documentation, and safety assessment; and case management, including referral to law enforcement and community- based domestic violence services.

Health management with battered women begins with identifying a history of domestic violence and meeting immediate medical needs. Following identification, a confidential assessment of service needs can progress from validation of a women's concern to a careful history of adult trauma, an overview of the dynamics in the relationship (patterns of control, strategic for resistance), a review of health and mental health problem that may be associated with abuse, and consideration of risk to any children involved. Domestic violence can be seen from a clinical perspective as a staged experience that involved injury, illness, isolation and complex psychosocial problems. Cross-assessment for women battering and child abuse is an essential component of any domestic violence procedure, as well as of interviews with mothers in pediatric or obstetrical settings. Careful documentation, using direct quotes from the client or photograph of injuries where appropriate, can sensitize subsequent health care providers to the importance of domestic violence in a patient life and provide an ongoing record for the client of resources and survival strategies she has explored and used. A safety plan is a shared understanding, sometimes written and sometimes not of how the women can best be protected when confronted by a dangerous partner. Clinical violence intervention is summarized by the three as: ask, assess, and advocate. The success of this strategy depends on accountability achieved through monitoring and feedback, including follow-up to determine what has actually changed in relation to what a women hopes to gain through each step in her plan. Even if things turn out different than she hoped, the sense of control a women gains from having identified her problem and developed a plan to manage it is a significant step toward her recovery.

Clinical violence intervention required health care organization to commit resource to crisis intervention, emergency hospitalization, counseling, support groups, and advocacy; they must also bolster staff resources to complement identification and assessment. Such a comprehensive approach will require changes in medical practice that rival those seen in law enforcement. A critical facet of institutionalizing clinical violence intervention is outreach to all health programs that target women, particularly where problems are known to be aggravated by battering. Moreover, without such alliances, the forceful political action and creative programming needed to challenging the entrenched beliefs and practices that give rise to women battering will not materialize. Rather than respond defensively to the challenging posed by the long road ahead, the appropriate response of health providers is to mobilize behind the growing realization that freeing our citizens from coercion and control is a vital part of the public health mission **(Stark, 2001)**.

*“Women are being told that police will arrest, that temporary protection orders will keep abusers away, and that judge will send them to prison if the women will only be consistent and cooperative with prosecutors. In the majority of cases, women do not experience these outcomes and continue to be abused, harassed, and threatened”*  
(Ferraro, 1995, p, 269)

The victim’s rights movement and the women’s movement took a stand against the entire criminal justice system’s trivializing of violence committed against women. The battered women’s shelter movement exposed how common and widespread domestic violence was and demonstrated that battered women were not pathologically ill. In the legal arena, class action civil suits against police departments argued successfully that police responded more slowly and with less seriousness to violent crimes committed between non strangers than they did to stranger crimes. Finally social science researchers published scientific evidence claiming that arrest was more effective in deterring domestic violence than were other police responses, a development that fell neatly in line with the already growing demands for more rigorous criminal justice system intervention in violence against women. The legal response to domestic violence by the criminal justice actors is discussed and analyzed here at each point in the process: police officers, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers. Although serious intervention in domestic violence is now a widely accepted goal in the system, the practices and attitudes of criminal justice actors have not always kept pace with legislative and policy changes.

Historically, the criminal justice system treated domestic violence as a private issue, following a policy of non-intervention. Rather than respond to domestic violence as they would to other types of violence, police were encouraged to handle the situation as a civil matter, separating the parties or mediating the altercation. Until the mid-1980s, almost half of the states did not permit police to make arrest in domestic violence cases if there was no visible injury and if they had not witnessed the abuse.

In the last 15 years, great strides have been made to transform the beliefs and practices of the criminal justice system regarding domestic violence, with initial efforts being focused on the police. Most states now provide police with the option to arrest in misdemeanor domestic violence cases that they have not witnessed, but police officers may still rely on advising, mediating, possibly separating the couple, or issuing a citation to the offender requiring him to appear in court to answer specific charges. But in response to demands for more aggressive criminal justice action in domestic violence cases, mandatory and presumptive arrest statutes, which either limit or strongly guide police discretion, have become increasingly popular in current law enforcement efforts. These policies state that police officers have to (mandatory) or should (presumptive) arrest domestic violence perpetrators when probable cause for misdemeanors violence exists, Even if the violence does not occur in the officer's presence and even if the victim does not desire prosecution. In some jurisdiction, police may be required to use strict crime scene investigation and evidence gathering techniques so that prosecutors can move forward without the victims testimony. In addition to putting an emphasis on arrest in cases of domestic assault, many states also require officers to take more responsibility in handling these cases by providing victims with information on legal options and services and transporting victims to hospitals or shelters.

Although a mandatory or presumptive arrest policy in the case of misdemeanor domestic assault may seem straight forward, these policies have not been without problems in actual practice, given the discretionary nature of police work. Prosecutors today strive to play a more active role in prosecuting domestic violence cases, a change that was facilitated by criticism that they remained a huge obstacle in case processing. Domestic violence cases now flood the system as a response to presumptive arrest or mandatory arrest policies, and this has led to tremendous increases in prosecutorial caseloads.

In some jurisdictions, prosecutors have responded with the use of “no-drop” policies, which allow prosecutors to proceed without victim cooperation, although some policies allow victims to drop charges after they have completed counseling and provided an official explanation to the court. Ultimately, there is no definitive evidence that no-drop policies and increased use of the criminal justice system are any more effective than prosecution policies that prioritize the victim’s desires and let her wishes guide the prosecution effort. Despite the heightened awareness and legislative reform of the last two decades, judges have also been reluctant to treat domestic assault as seriously as they treat violence between strangers. One type of court option for domestic violence victims is the civil restraining order. Civil restraining orders, or orders of protection, were developed in response to the reluctance of the criminal justice system to handle effectively the criminal nature of domestic violence.

Because arrest, prosecution, and sentencing were rare events, civil court remedies permitted victims to circumvent the criminal process, yet still obtain some relief or have an additional remedy at their disposal. Today, restraining orders are more accessible and can actually provide various types of relief. As an alternative to incarceration, probation begins after either a plea negotiation or a conviction. Probation is most commonly used to force offender participation in treatment programs. Typically, a sentence of incarceration will be imposed but then suspended if the offender successfully completes other conditions, for example, he commits no further abuse, pays fines and victim restitution, or completes a treatment program. If the abuser is a repeat offender and has violated earlier probation requirements, he may face a split sentence of short incarceration followed by probation. But despite a policy emphasis on arrest, the practical realities are that the nature of police work is discretionary and that the victims themselves may not always desire an arrest. Furthermore, the diverse findings from the research on specific deterrence provide only weak support for the notion that arrest can actually prevent future domestic violence. Although some evidence suggests deterrence in the short term, other evidence indicates that arrest might increase assaultive behavior, putting some victims in increased danger, particularly when it comes to unemployed suspects. It follows that the future of police practice lies in mandated guidelines that emphasize the protection of victims and that also consider victim preference. It also follows that for police to implement discretionary guidelines effectively training must be improved so that officers better understand the dynamics of domestic violence and the unique of battered women.



Better training and education would also help officers to overcome stereo typical attitudes. In addition, police initiated arrest warrants hold some promise as one of the options for preventing future violence. Police intervention will only be successful to the extent that it is supported by prosecutorial and judicial action. Indeed, many prosecutors' officers responded to the criticism that they were the weak link in the system by reexamining their standard policies and developing strategic to enhance case- processing efforts. There is insufficient empirical support for policies that call for punishment or for policies that embrace the rehabilitation of batterers. Many prosecutions pursue cases without victim cooperation and often they follow no-drop policies, which may be inappropriate. Victims are the experts of their own situations, and prosecutors should respect their decisions, even if victims' decision conflict with care processing. Prosecutors should also strive to ensure victim safety.

Civil orders of protection offer a potentially meaning full alternative for victims, especially when the evidence is not strong enough to sustain a criminal charge. The success of using civil options depends on the ability of law enforcement to serve warrants quickly, of prosecutors to enforce violations, and of judges to mete out proportionate punishment for violators. For the last two decades, the criminal justice systems' treatment of domestic violence has been subjected to close scrutiny and intense criticism. Whereas the initial emphasis was on police practice, observers quickly noted that policy and research must address intervention after the suspect is taken into custody, such as prosecutorial and judicial action. It was further noted that the exclusive focus on the suspect must give way to more focus on the needs of the victim, such as her preference for arrest and prosecution, and her security at all points in the system. More recently, it has been pointed out that a coordinated criminal justice and community- based response is required to combat the complex problem of domestic violence. Despite heightened awareness and policy changes, the criminal justice system, with its inherent focus on the individual offender, can achieve only so much in the struggle to end domestic violence. This is not to say that arrest, prosecution and civil remedies should be discarded, but their effectiveness is limited (**Iovanni & Miller, 2001**).

**The male gets more offers and more qualified and well-paid jobs.** The female is repeatedly less well treated in terms of employment possibilities. Women in gender have lower wages than men even within the same occupation at the same level; women experience more unemployment than men; women take more responsibility for unpaid

labor; they are strongly underrepresented at higher position in working life; they have less autonomy and control over work and lower expectation of promotion. The cause of these issues is the existence of gender order of a patriarchy, which gives many more options and privileges to men, particularly in working life, but also in life in general. Counteracting sex discrimination and conservative gender patterns would make possible a more rational way of recruiting, keeping, placing, training and promoting labor. Employing and giving voice to men and women in terms of viewpoints and experiences may also facilitate organizational learning and creativity.

The main part of gender studies seems to evolve around three major points: (1) The notion gender is central to and relevant to understanding all social relations, institutions and processes; (2) gender relations constitute a problem as they are characterized by patterns of domination subordination, inequalities, oppression and oppositions; (3) gender relations are seen as social constructions. Sex and gender are overlapping concepts. Sex is typically seen as referring to biological sex, i. e. the fact that nature produces people as men and women. Gender refers to how men and women are being formed through social and cultural processes. Today's labor market is often characterized as being highly segregated, horizontally and vertically. The concept of segregation implies that the division of labor is not based on "natural" skills or on the "free will" of individuals, which results in inequalities, mainly that women are concentrated within low pay areas, whereas men's jobs are better paid and offer better promotion prospects. The division of labor into 'female' and 'male' work areas is broadly considered to be a vital element in the subordination of women. The gendered division of labor has nothing to do with economy/ biology but is historically constructed and that work is labeled female or male on the basis of historically changeable interests and assumptions. Traditionally women perform six tasks in the domestic spheres which are necessary for the human race to survive and life to be tolerable and these functions are still women's main work areas today: to bear children, to feed them and other members of the family; to clothe people; to care for the small, the sick, the elderly and the disabled; to be responsible for the education of the children; and to take care of the home (including making products of use to the home). Men have shared and performed the tasks which are needed to sustain and continue the human race, such as hunting, farming and fishing. Men are much better paid, have far more formal power in organizations and hold the most prestigious jobs.

Hence top level jobs are generally viewed and characterized as masculine, there are strict ideas about women's work and men's work within the specific community. What exactly and historically is regarded as typically feminine or masculine to a considerable extent varied from country to country and even from one region to another. Within certain work areas there was even a taboo against the other sex doing the job. Prestige was connected to the work men did, and men lost status and power if they did women's work. It was easier for women to do men's work than the other way round. When women did men's work, they were not harassed in the same way. However, it is difficult for women to achieve the status connected to men's jobs. In every country women in general earn less than men. Women play a dominated role within the social security, health & service sectors, teaching and the retail trade while men predominate in the technical fields, trade, transportation, administration and national defense. A focus on the social construction of masculinities and femininities may be a productive approach to understanding gender division of labor and other organization phenomena.

These concepts refer to how broad domains of life are culturally gendered as well as to how people conform to or transgress the social standards and guidelines for living suggested by what are culturally defined as masculine and feminine. Besides, gender segregation in labour markets and work organizations, the social constructivist use of masculinity and femininity as an interpretive framework is useful for exploring a wide range of aspects of organizations, including organizational cultural and leadership. Organizational and occupational structures, processes and practices may be viewed as culturally masculine. Gendering organizations pay attention to how organizational structures and process are dominated by culturally defined masculine meaning. Masculinity can be defined as values, experiences and meaning that are cultural interpreted as masculine and typically feel "natural" to or are ascribed to men more than women in the particular cultural context. Masculinity can be termed in organizational context as authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism, careerism and in formalism (men building networks on the basis of shared masculine interests and excluding women). A typical description of masculinity stresses features such as hard, dry, impersonal, objective, explicit, outer focused, action- oriented, analytic, dualistic, quantitative, linear, rationalist, reductionist, materialist, self-assertion, separation, independence, control, competition, focused perception, rationally and analysis. On the other hand, femininity is a matter of the prioritizing feelings, the importance of the imaginative and creative.

Female values or principal are characterized by interdependence, cooperation, receptivity, merging, acceptance, awareness of patterns, wholes and contexts, emotional tone, personalistic perception, being, intuition, synthesizing, nurturance's, compassion, sensitivity and empathy. Masculinity is viewed as the antithesis of femininity. The notion of anti-femininity lies at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood. Linking masculinity tightly with males and femininity with females is unfortunate as it given priority to biological sex. To explore how people think, feel and make sense in relation to these categories is vital of understanding gender relations and gender identities.

Ideas about what is masculine feminine and what is natural normal for men and women in relation to these qualities guide constrain and trap people in all respects from occupational choice to acceptance rejection of tasks in everyday working life. An important aspect of masculinities or femininities is identity. Contemporary forms of identities offer a broad set of possible ways of being for men and women, at least in parts of the western countries. The expression of sexuality in work-places is an important element of organizational culture.

The concept of culture is a set of meanings, ideas and symbols that are shared by the members of collective and that have evolved over time. The very idea of a cultural understanding of organizations is to investigate meaning and symbolism at the local, workplace level. This should be done without neglecting the broader context of local phenomena, such as society, class and other cultural patterns putting their imprints on groups and organizations. There is certainly no lack of studies showing regarding women, but there are also others indicating considerable variety in the cultural expression of different groups of women as well as the view of men towards women entering being present in different work contexts. In addition, the experiences and values of women differ. The research on women, managerial jobs and leadership is extensive. While older studies of the 1970s pointed at evaluation bias against women, or recent work seems to indicate that such bias is more circumstantial than general. Only when engaging in leadership behavior that was inconsistent with sex stereotypes were female leader evaluated less favorably than males when acting in the same way. Perhaps prejudices and biases against women in managerial positions have decreased over time. In terms of sex stress and managerial jobs, the research findings are more consistent.

Female managers show more stress symptoms than their male colleagues, which party seems to be related to their taking more responsibility for children and home. Children appear to be another meaning and other consequences for women than for men. Many researchers believe that having children leads to experiences and orientations that make women in marginal jobs behave in a different way from men. In this perspective women are seen as being discriminated against, and denied the same opportunities as men both in a general career context and specifically with regard to the possibility of attaining managerial positions. Conservatism and prejudice prevent women from reaching the higher positions in organizations or in working life in general. Sometimes the interests of some men in keeping women out of the competition are referred to. However, it is claimed that most areas of organization, management and working life studies may be enriched through considering gender aspects- remembering at the same time that focusing only on gender, or exclusively using a gender vocabulary may lead one to lose sight of important aspects (Alvesson and Billing, 1997).

**Bangladesh has a legal system consisting of two types of laws, the general and the personal law.** The general law could be said to be based on egalitarian principles of sexual equality but the personal or family law, based on religion, does not operate on the basis of absolute equality to men and women. Here particular emphasis is given to Islamic family law, which is based primary on the religion of Islam. Islam places women on equal footing with men in the eyes of Allah. This definitely does not mean that men & women are equal in Islamic Law. At the same time, the Quran and early Islamic law are concerned about the betterment of the status of women. Islamic law justifies gender differentiations on the ground of creation and nature, giving special rights and duties both to men and women. Islam does not believe in concepts of sexual equality which ignore natural difference and the special aptitudes, specific powers and faculties of men and women, but regards men and women as complementary to each other. Thus, socially the sexes are in an equitable symbiotic relation. The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women of 18<sup>th</sup> December 1979 purports to guarantee equal rights to women. Women in Bangladesh are also apparently guaranteed sexual equality by the constitution of Bangladesh and the general law. But patriarchal interpretation of the law continues the dominance of patriarchal attitudes. Women in Bangladesh tend to respect and cherish their family as the highest priority of their life.

What they really want is not equality but freedom from violence and economic deprivation imposed by men. The law, on the one hand, formally provides improvements in the legal position of women; on the other hand, it maintains its support to the patriarchal structures of the family. The religions and official family laws of Bangladesh clearly aim at gender equality rather than absolute sexual equality. If the gender equality concept were translated into family law, it would disturb the equilibrium of the social fabric and the power relationship between the sexes. As we shall see, women also benefit from living in a patriarchally- dominated system. Today, women in Bangladesh are deprived even of the rights granted by the religions and state- sponsored family laws. Prominently, women are deprived of their rights of maintenance, dower, dissolution of marriage, custody, guardianship, and other forms of property. Most Muslim wives in Bangladesh do not receive any dower and maximum women from families with land do not intend to claim their legal share in their parental property to retain better links with their natal family and to maintain a cordial relationship with the natal family, so that they can visit them occasionally on “*naior*”<sup>10</sup>. Women’s renouncing of inheritance for ‘*naior*’ appears to be a fair exchange because this inheritance may be misused by the husband, while ‘*naior*’ is women’s exclusive vocation. However, the concept of “*naior*” is another subtle mechanism of subordination.

*Naoir*, as a pretext of allowing an outlet for women to escape from their own household, is denying their right to the parental property. The usual manifestation of women’s subordination in a patriarchally dominated society may be identified in child marriages, polygamy, unilateral divorce, *purdah* or seclusion, dowry and violence against women. Women in Bangladesh are, thus, subordinated within an intensely hierarchical system of gender relations which constantly attempts to deny women not only access to social power and control over their own lives but also granted rights to which they are entitled. The material base of patriarchy is men’s control of property, income and women’s labor. The average Bengali women, particularly in rural Bengal, contributes very significantly in the household, performing laborious jobs which are no less vital than those done by men. However, their contribution is not adequately recognized and often women are categorized together with children as minors appended to men as the guardians and bread winners.

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<sup>10</sup> Women’s occasional visit to parents’ family.

Government sponsored vigorous action to improve the status of women was not only to legitimize elite rule but to acquire more aid from the donor agencies by giving attention to women.

Not only the government but also NGOs used women's issues as a potential source of funding. The actual need of women in Bangladesh concerns protection from economic deprivation and violence. The real needs of women have not been given enough priority in the family law. The needs and demands of women in this society are not focused on gender equality but on sexual equity. Violence against women has reached the stage of a national problem in Bangladesh. In the sphere of domestic violence, cruelty to women for dowry and other causes has become a grave issue. Women are expected to remain mute and suffer innumerable agonies at the hands of their husbands and in-laws if they fail to provide handsome dowries. Stories of women burnt alive or murdered by their husbands and in-laws for failing to procure the required dowry are not new anymore. Women continue to fall prey to regular harassment and disrespect. Dowry deaths are a gruesome reminder of the authoritativeness of patriarchy. In fact dowry deaths have become an everyday event in south Asia. Many women in Bangladesh are filing divorce petitions to escape torture at the hands of in-laws for failing to meet the expectations of dowry. Cruelty towards women in recent years has increased threefold and the overall incidence of violence is now a great social problem. The dowry prohibition Act of 1980, the cruelty to women (Deterrent Punishment) ordinance of 1983, the Repression Against women and children Act of 1995 were hurriedly enacted to combat such problems. However, even if women in Bangladesh have secured favorable legislation, they could not secure its benefits due to impediments to its enforcement.

This is also reflected in other family law reforms. The reason behind this lies in the traditional norms and values in the male- dominated patriarchal society of Bangladesh. Violence against women is a trend which is deeply related to the oppressive structures of the dominant male values of Bangladeshi society. Al though this society is subject to various forces of modernization, traditional roles and values remains relevant for women today. Within this system of structural inequality in society, simply calling for sexual equality is not a feasible answer. Law is regarded as a reflection of the patriarchal normative structures, manipulated to perpetuate the oppression of women. The family may be an oppressive institution for women. It also sees its potential to honor and protect women.

The major problem of the family law system in Bangladesh appears to be that it does not take into account the reality of the social conditions, particularly women's concerns about freedom from violence and economic deprivation, either by incorporating them into various enactments or by giving them appropriate importance while interpreting the law in courts. Even most legislation during the British and the Pakistan period to ameliorate the legal position of women was merely rhetoric. At the same time, there are many conflicting claims on the legal system, not all of them favoring women. The analysis of women's rights under the constitution framework indicates the disparity between the religious family law and the constitutional rights. It also reveals the internal contradictions within the constitution between granting sexual equality and making special laws for women. Actually, women in Bangladesh are perceived to be degraded to the position of second class citizens because of their economic, social, political and legal bondages in relation to gender. There is a wide gap between the theory of religious and official family laws, intimately connected with the lives of women, and practical application in society. For example, child marriage still persists, marriages are not registered, divorce, in most cases still seems to be the prerogative of the man, dowers remain unpaid and there is a distinct gap between women's maintenance rights and actual practice. It will protect women more effectively if the judiciary is more sensitized about the particular needs of women. What is required now is better implementation of the existing legal rights of women, at all levels, to secure for them freedom from violence and economic deprivation. At the same time, men should be conscious of their duties to protect women from violence and economic deprivation. Everybody in society should be aware that it is morally unacceptable to treat any women with cruelty or to deprive her of economic assets or entitlements by illegal and illicit means (**Monsoor, 1999**).

**Here, the empowerment of the tribal women (like Oraons, Mundas, Santhali, Mahalis, Lohars, Chick Braik, etc.) in Ranchi city, the capital of Jharkhand, has been studied on the basis of class, gender, power and ethnicity. The process of gender discrimination is quite subtle in the tribal society. Gender is an important component in the system of stratification in the tribal society. Today, the tribal women virtually a bonded laborer in her marital home she slaves for the family, while the men folk enjoy leisure, she struggles to manage the home and finances, while the male can be totally irresponsible with no social sanction. In the rural society, the responsibility of the male is complete the moment he holds the plough and prepares the field for cultivation.**



The tribal women are extremely hardworking and competent but she has little or no authority in the crucial decisions within the family and community. The institution of the community which enshrined the women's freedom and equality, specially the rights to choose the life partner traditional of bride- price, youth- dormitory etc. have been system thematically perverted to suit the new reality, which discriminate women. Tribal society of the area studied is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. The man is the head of the household, though substantial amount of freedom is given to woman within the family. But she has no power in the public sphere. Patriarchy is not simply control over women's body in the sphere of reproduction; it is control over her total labour, whether for production or reproduction. Women's labour is exchanged for consumption, which is determined by the male head of the household. The socio-cultural laws are highly discrimination against women in respect of the distribution of economic work and economic returns. The women have to perform the monotonous work of transplanting, weeding and having but the right over the produce is that of the male member of the society. However, unlike the non-tribal women, the tribal women have same control over some forest and minor agricultural products. In addition to the sex-based attitudinal variation that are reflected through her role and interaction in family. A woman is considered inferior and subordinate to men. Subordination of women in this respect is universally accepted among tribals. The roots of this lie in their being patriarchal where the important position through succession goes to male only. Succession to female is an alternative only in exceptional situation. But still the patriarchal customs are so strong that it puts limitations to such situations. The patriarchal norms define the clear division of labour. Men were hunters and women gatherers. In any society, power and prestige are held by those who control the distribution of valued goods beyond the family.

Hunting was more prestigious than gathering since the hunted animal was distributed to the whole community, while women gathered enough food or water for her family only. Women are the first historic category of non-owning workers. The tribes now also have notions of "purity of women" and perpetuation of the lineage, in order to be able to pass on the results of accumulation, viz. Land. It is with the establishment of individual property, that the tribal women lose relative autonomy in her own sphere of actively leading to strict division of labour.

Strong patriarchy nations with the tribal society lead to another important inequality in the field of political participation. The traditional village assembly (Panchayat)<sup>11</sup> is all male institution. Women are excluded from this traditional political organization. Men owned the land and strict rules of residence ensured patrilocality. This enabled men to utilize and appropriate women's labour for accumulation within the male line. For women labour did not mean ownership, the two were separate. In fact, the very possibility of women expending their labour power on land, are now dependent upon their relation to men, whether fathers or husbands. Men control over the process of agricultural production is reflected in the strong taboos against women ploughing, in some cases against women even touching the plough. The process of alienation of women's labour within the family is accompanied by a corresponding control over aspects of women's social existence, over marriage, sexually free movement and so on, along with the regular use of violence to "keep women in their place". Tribal women is considered inferior to men by existing tradition as well as in actual life pattern the inequality between sexes in apparent in all walks of life. She is more dependent on her mother from whom she receives the early training in household duties. She has considered voice in the selection of her partner even if she does not actually select him. She can divorce at her will expect in an every few instances. She is taught to be submissive to authority and invariably makes her hesitant to develop strong opinion and commitment outside her home world. She lead a very hard life. She does not stop working till the day of delivery. She continues to work inside and outside the house. The child was generally delivered by the village midwife, after which the mother and the child were secluded in a corner of the house for twenty one days. She could not work these days and only given watery rice and some pulses. Religious ceremony was performed after the childbirth and feast was organized. Motherhood also put additional burden of work and responsibilities on the mother. She has to resume the normal duties shortly after the birth and take care of the child. In Jharkhand, a woman carries her baby to field, forest and markets.

Traditionally all community decision- making power belong to the village elders (called Panchayat), who were all man. They have got the final authority on all matters. Women are completely debarred from taking part in any traditional political organization.

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<sup>11</sup> Most powerful and decision making body composed of rich, educated and influential males in Manipuri community.

They have no right to be present or to elect a member in the tribal Panchayat. The religion of tribal's has sufficient say in regard to the status of women.

There are some elements of religious life where the women are not permitted to participate. This specially applies to religious position which are said to be privilege of man alone. In the realm of religious practices and rituals a tribal women cannot hold the office of a priest. Women are not supposed to be present in the secret grove or during main rituals. She cannot attend the communal worship, and also cannot partake of the sacrificial meat. There are two crucial areas of inequality between men and women in tribal society- property right and political participation. The rules regarding divorce and remarriage have remained and practiced according to the Hindu customs, but rarely do women decide to leave their husband unless they are forced by circumstances, as they have become much more dependent on their husband. As most of the men have adopted the Hindu caste values, so no one comes forward to marry widow and divorce women. Today girls have very little say in the choice of a partner. Dowry is slowly replacing bride- price and woman is in the danger of becoming only a commodity.

Due to the process of sanskritisation it revolted in decline of freedom of movement, in premarital sex life, choice of partner, right to divorce and remarry. Now the boy is given preference to a girl child. The scenario of education amongst tribal women is quite disappointing. There is gender bias in the literacy of tribal population as in other groups. The female literacy is being lower than the male literacy. As a patriarchal society, it imposes serious constrains on women like specific cultural and ritual constrains, no property rights and inheritance rights, lack of decision making power, restrictions on freely movement etc. The dominance of male and subjugation of female and the non-realization by the female that they are being discriminated and exploited explain the existence of other types of discrimination in tribal society. Even where the tribal women have realized the expectation and discrimination committed on them, by their male counterparts, they do not have the will, opportunity, courage and method to express their views and grievances. So this is not only explains the existence of discrimination against tribal women but also its perpetuation. Today in urban set up tribal women is discriminated and exploited both in the hands of tribal and non-tribal men. Absence of skills, education and training has their productivity low and thus they have to face wage discrimination and very low payments.

Modern wage system is highly discriminated towards women. For almost the same type of work a woman is paid less compare to her male counterpart. At the same time tribal women do face sexual abuse and harassment at the work place by their employers.

The tradition of witch- hunting is an example of cultural oppression of tribal women. The heinous practice of branding a woman as witch and then killing her publicly is unabated in the tribal society. Thus, women experience subordination in many ways. At home, workplace and in everyday life a woman faces male domination. A woman is expected to confirm to the ideal of a hard working person ready to sacrifice her own interest to the happiness of members in her family without any demand in return.

Since a tribal girl is socialized to become submissive and passive, norms dictate that a woman is kept insulted and deprived access to knowledge agencies, information and technology. A woman is discriminated in all walks of life. In some cases the unemployed and alcoholic husbands' ill- treat their wives and demand food, money and other things. Abusive language, beating and threats of ouster are often used by the disoriented husbands. Thus, gender and class reinforce subordination of lower class women. In the tribal society, women are illiterate and unemployed and are deprived of proper health care. Poverty, malnutrition, mortality and morbidity are much higher among them. However, women belonging to the upper strata are less discriminated and exploited to the tribal women of the lower classes. Gender differentiation instead of reducing with economic development, tend to widen with increasing capitalist development. Disparities with regard to access to economic and social services and resource appear to increase with the improvement in women the level of such services. The gender gap widens in the context of higher life expectancy rates and reduced mortality. Change in the position of women implies changes in the hierarchical order of society.

There is a visible relationship between patriarchy and social hierarchy, and both drawing strength from each other. When the hierarchal order is threatened by new forces, it reasserts its strength through patriarchal control over women. So the basic hierarchical order remains virtually unchanged. New technology and life- styles have resulted to a renewed and wild covered form of oppression and exploitation of women in the form of dowry, purdah (social seclusion), wage discrimination and educational deprivation, etc. in Ranchi. Empowerment is not possible without an overall development of the tribal society and that of tribal women in particular. Women's empowerment could be realized as a concrete reality only if the gender equality is actualized.

The very issue of women's empowerment crops up because of man's refusal to view a woman as his other half without which his individual identity is incomplete.

The tribal men are totally against women's freedom, free movement, and equal right share in property and land in the name of safeguards of the customary laws. Three strategies are essential for women's development from the margin to the core of the society: (1) economic independence, (2) educational development, and (3) access to health care and family planning. Tribal women may be treated as a special target group. Though tribal women in the city have more income, opportunities and bargaining power within the household, yet they are not able to compete with men on equal terms, due to gendered limitations. Hence tribal continue to remain powerless and marginalized. In Ranchi city, in the name of preserving the cultural ethos and revitalization of tribal customs, violence against women has been institutionalized, including subjugation of women in everyday life. Because of the patriarchal ambience, granting equal rights to tribal women have never been a reality. It is basically a feeding on the culture of silence as many of the tribal women say that they don't want to break up the family as well as the ethnic solidarity. Inequality is so naturalized in everyday life that the subjugated women do not protest (**Bodra, 2008**).

**God brought this amazing universe into being and he created men and women both.**

The custom of not remarrying widows has spread in so many places, to so many castes, like a great sickness. It's hard to imagine the bitter despair all these hundreds and thousands of widows must suffer. And how many disasters come out of it. Because 'Stridharma' hasn't ever been saved just by making people sit at home and control their thoughts. What they do with their minds and eyes can make them just as guilty. If men snatch away all the happy signs of a woman's marriage, if they chop off one woman's hair and wipe off another's kumkum from her forehead, women still have the same hearts inside, the same thoughts of good and evil. A man can strip the outside till it's naked, but he cannot do the same to the inside. "Stridharma" means always obeying orders from your husband and doing everything he wants; he can kick his wife and swear at her, keep his whores, get drunk, gamble with dice and bawl he's lost all his money, steal, commit murder, be treacherous, slander people, rob peoples' treasures or squeeze them for brides. He can do all this, but when he comes home, stridharma means women are meant to think, "Oh, Who's this coming now but our little lord Krishna, who's just stolen the milkmaids' curds and milk and tried to blame Chandravali for it"; then smile at him and

offer their devotion, stand ready at his service as if he was Parramatta' himself. Women are supposed to worship their husbands as if they were a god.

Pativrata' means the story of 'Savitri' which tells us if a husband kicks his wife, she should just smile at him saying 'Ò Don't do that, my lord and husband: you'll hurt your foot, you should sit down", and promptly start massaging his foot, Wife would not cry if he beats her with his fist or a stick. Wife should smile at him, fetch fresh butter and rub it into his hands for him, saying, Ô my lord, the palm of your hand must be burning from those blows'. And if there is no butter in the house, use the neighbor's, and if she's got none, run and get some from the market.

If he dislikes a particular sort of food, she's meant to avoid it too. If the husband is really to be like a God to the wife then he shouldn't behave like one. And if wives are to worship them like true devotees, husbands shouldn't have a tender love for them in return, and care about their joys and pains like a real God would. When the God see those who worship them, they feel happy and satisfied. Like the God, husbands feel happy and satisfied. When husbands find virtues or faults in people devoted to them, they shouldn't take a proper account of them, accept their shortcomings and correct them with love. Women are bound to treat their husbands like a God even they are nasty. In traditional days, wives treated the command of a husband with great reverence. If one was carrying out the command of her husband, there was nothing wrong even in lying to another man's wife and procuring another man's wife for her husband, it that was what he wanted. There was nothing wrong at all in obeying her husband's command to deceive someone else's wife with her devotion as a pativrata' and deliver her over to satisfy his pleasure. The husband's happy because his wife carried out her great duty of seeing to his pleasure, and the wife's happy because she thinks she's done the proper thing. It is not impossible for men to pull poor widows out of this pit of shame. Men can break some caste rules, put the kumkum' back on their foreheads and let them enjoy the happiness of marriage again. God, who decides everything in this world, has used his great intelligence to fill the world with all sorts of fascinating things. But two things drag people's minds towards them strongest of all: wealth and women. Out of these, women are even more piercing than money. Women fill mans lives with pleasures a thousand times greater than any money could give them.

Like men, a woman cannot be happy without men. She would be in just the same state as a man. Put her in whatever wonderful luxury we like, give her the whole world, but if she

is alone, we just see what condition she would be in. It's God's own wish that the two should be joined as a pair. God has created female in everything he has made, from the birds on down even to inanimate trees and plants.

There is no grace or beauty in anything without matching pairs. No work gets done that is not done in pairs. Men cannot live like a Ôsanyasi' even for a month or two without seeing a woman's face. Without a woman by a man's side, his own uncle, even his father would hesitate to stand him up alongside a couple. If a man with a wife and children gets into difficulties through his vices or his virtues, if he falls out of favour with someone or gets in trouble with moneylenders, no one really cares about the man himself; people only let him off for the sake of his wife and children. Actually, woman is the source of all generative power in the universe. It is in her hands to look after this cart of worldly life and drive it forward. This is one power woman kind has. A mother loves her child/son beyond what she cares for herself, she watches over his life in times of trouble even more than when he was a child. She flashes to his command quick as lighting, she takes care in all sorts of ways; she is at his service, a sweet saint who bears everything in times of sorrow or of joy, sweet to the end. She always tries to make her son happy. On the other hand, this man heaping all this blame on to her men try to push down her to the bottom of the earth. They assume women are shy, delicate, idiots and foolish in their very natures while men are naturally so bold, courageous, strong, learned. Our male dominated society always proves the proverb "Might is right". So, men label women with all sorts of insulting names, calling them utterly feeble, stupid, bold, and thoughtless --men shut them up endlessly in the prison of the home, while they attempt to building up their own importance, becoming Mr. Sir and so on. Starting from the childhood men collect all rights in their own hands and womankind they just push in a dark corner far from the real world, shut up in purdah, frightened, illiterate, prisoner not allowed to go outside, sat on, dominated as if she was a female slave. And all the while they go about dazzling women all with the light of their own virtue. Learning is not for women. They cannot move freely. Every woman is ignorant in our patriarchal society. Who lives and who dies is all in the hands of the all-powerful God.

Once women have lost their position as wives, they have to hide their faces as if they have committed some huge crime worse even than murder and spend the rest of their lives shut away in a dark corner. They are bound to shave all the curls and hair off their heads, all the ornaments are taken away, all her beauty vanishes.

A widow has stripped and exposed in all sorts of way as if she belonged to no one, she becomes the widow-pot hidden in the corner. She is shut out from going to wedding, receptions and other auspicious occasions that married women go to. Because her husband has died. She is unlucky: ill-fate is written on her forehead. Her face is not to be seen, it is a bad omen. But that woman is not responsible for her husband's death. It is the will of the Almighty God. On the other hand, if one wife dies, a man just will get another on the tenth day itself. He goes off and marry another woman and settle down happily with her. He can lead a normal life like before. If one wife died or got ill, then our chap just moves straight on to another. And if he is a rich man, he is luckier than all the others.

It means he enjoys two sorts of power: one comes from his money; and the other just because he is a man. In fact, what is good for a woman ought to be good for a man as well. There is no difference between men and women. Women are not made of different things from men altogether. Women are also a woman being, not some utterly trivial form of life, like a louse or a flea. Even in our patriarchal society the old man spends every minute of his time looking out for a woman. The old corpse pays out a couple of thousand rupees and gets a pertly doe-eyed girl for himself, just like buy a goat from the butcher and tie it up as bait to catch the tiger. Then he falls down dead one day and it is all over. His worldly life is all finished and it is her again who has left to suffer. Once the axe has fallen on her out of the sky, she accepts the burdens of widowhood, praises her husband's qualities good and bad and puts up with torments from the rest of the household till the day she dies.

If a woman's husband has just a small illness, her mouth dries up with terror. She watches him contently, worrying for him more than her very life. If he is out of devotion or out of fear. She does everything just as he wishes. It is possible to be loving and open with someone, whether it is a man or a woman. But she has no choice but to be nice to him, however much she has got a mind of her own. On the contrary, if a man's wife is ill for a year or two, then he will wait for her death and pray relief from this situation and get tired and sick of having to feed her medicine. Whatever a wife's circumstances, she cannot say anything like that, out of shame at what people would think. The husband has got to be treated with reverence no matter what happens. It is like the Muslims - if a man is wealthy, he is an amir, if he is poor, he is a fakir and after his death, they call him a pir (Shinde, 1882).



.....as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world (Virginia Woolf, 1938).

In Surveying the relationship between women and nationalism it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it turns on male crafted conceptions of nation and national identity. In a complex play, the state is often gendered male and the nation gendered female. Women are commonly constructed as the symbolic form of the nation whereas men are invariably represented as its chief agents and, with statehood achieved, emerge as its major beneficiaries. Where measures designed to manage conflict do fail and violence does erupt, martial values are prized and symbols of separate nationalist identities exalted.

In such contexts women are invariably marginalized by a condition of “armed patriarchy”. Anti-colonial nationalism has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope, only rarely taking ‘women’s experiences as the starting point for an understanding of how a people becomes colonized or how it throw off the shackles of that material and psychological domination’. When a nationalist movement becomes militarized male privilege in the community usually becomes more entrenched and militarization puts a premium on communal unity in the name of national survival, a priority which can silence women critical of patriarchal practices and attitudes; in so doing, nationalist militarization can privilege men. A divided society in a prolonged period of conflict inevitably develops values which underestimate the role of women of their essential contribution to the social order. Even where conflict is succeeded by a peace of sorts, or at least a condition of non-war, the exclusion of women is sustained. This process of exclusion is gendered. People, practices’ symbols and ways of thinking coded as ‘masculine’ mark the centre of politics, while what is rendered ‘feminine’ is relegated the marriage. Moreover, fighting alongside men to achieve independence does not provide a guarantee of women’s inclusion as equal citizens. After independent, women are forced to return to the domesticity of former years. Often men suffer a collective and convenient memory loss about the contribution made by women to national liberation struggles. As a result one of women warriors commented’ “It was better when we were in the field- we were equal with the men and we got good treatment”. While femininity may be seen as a coping mechanism, it can also be interpreted to mean that women can be both individually and collectively active agents in their own subordination.

The diversity of Islamic practice throughout the world is such that the status of women in Muslim societies is neither uniform nor unchanging nor unique but varies with class, ethnicity, level of educational attainment and age. Whether a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, Hinduism, Judaism or Christianity is more or less oppressive of women, but the roles of women are assigned as cultural markers of national identity and propriety. The limits to self-actualization by women are culturally and historically specific.

Where ethnic identity is mobilized into an exclusivist nationalist movement, the limits to self-actualization for women can be profound. Moghadam (1993: 71 ff) distinguished between two types of revolution and national identity construction: a ‘‘Women-in-the-Family’’ or patriarchal model; and a ‘‘Women’s Emancipation’’ or modernizing model. The former (encompassing the French, Algerian and the Iranian revolutions of 1989, 1962 & 1979 respectively), commonly stressing sexual difference, relegated women to a subordinate status, while the latter (including the Russian, South Yemen and Afghan revolutions of 1917, 1967 & 1978) were those within which national progress and societal transformation were viewed as inextricably bound up with equality and the emancipation of women. In comparing nationalist struggles internationally, we discover specificity, but also remarkable similar constructions of women in relation to nation- a reminder that nationalism is always gendered. The resurgence of nationalism in central and Eastern Europe and its tenacity elsewhere, offer the opportunity to recognize a new way in which constructions of national identity are gendered.

Many recent political transitions have been in a liberalizing if not a democratizing direction; all develop through what Priddham (1993) terms ‘‘zones of uncertainty’’, whether precipitated by a programme of reform or a break with the past. Some aspects of transitional process do appear to be more predictable than others. Just as there is an unhappy marriage between feminism and Marxism, events in the former Soviet Union demonstrate an equally miserable relationship between feminism and neo-nationalisms. In old East Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, democratization and liberalization appear to mean masculinism. Enloe (1993) woke up ‘‘the morning after’’ with a nasty hangover caused by her recognition that, far from heralding a brave new world of sexual politics, the ending of superpower rivalry merely fortified her understanding ‘‘of the ways in which men have used nationalism to silence women and conscious of how nationalist

ideologies, strategies and structures have served to update and so perpetuate the privileging of masculinity' (1993:229). Mainstream text on nationalism have ignored the significance of gender, a neglect that feminist scholars have sought to remedy by demonstrating that gender is central to the project of fashioning national identity. The renaissance of nationalism and the allied processes of regime transition have coincided with two other trends in feminist thinking: first, the shift from recognition of differences among women to their celebration; and second, the deconstruction by post structuralists of the category 'women'.

The understanding of 'women' as ' a constantly shifting signifier of multiple meanings', together with the legitimization of difference among women, supplies a necessary corrective to the ethnocentrism of the earlier phases of second -wave feminism which postulated the existence of a global sisterhood- most notoriously in the slogan 'women are the niggers of the world'. The concentration on diversity among women is not problem- free. The stress on 'difference' risks "masking the conditions that give some forms of 'difference' values & power over others. In the context of race and ethnicity, this can lead to the marginalization of issues such as racism, racial domination and white supremacy". The significance of difference should not be denied, because it does arrest unreflective universalism of the earlier women's movement. On the other hand, it may generate timidity on the part of 'first world' feminists. Stung by criticisms of their ignorance of, and historic complicity in, the oppression of "third world" women they may feel unable to do little more than organize around their own oppressions, perhaps abandoning those, no matter that they are valued as different, deemed to be 'other' the conjuncture of cultural analysis, identity politics and the re-ascendancy of nationalism is problematic. Just when marginal and oppressed groups are asserting their rights as political subjects is no time to deconstruct these identities. In this article, the author also attempt to theorize nationalism in different ways: nationalism is the whole process of nation building: a sense of national consciousness or sentiment; a symbolic and linguistic representation of the nation; an ideology; and a movement intended to realize the national will. The histories of Latin American nationhood are marked gendered in their templates, often highlighting hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities Men appear in the histories of battles, governments and monarchs, whereas women appear as icons of notional domesticity, moral and 'private' sociality.

No longer were women simply domestics, maternal figures with-- no wider community but active and majority participants demanding changes to gender relations.

Without public power women will remain “the subjected territory across which the boundaries of nationhood are marked out and not active participation in the construction of nations. Patriarchal orthodoxies results in women losing the struggle for common and equal rights once a nation state is established. Union women themselves questions and organize and press for change within nationalist movements, they are not likely to achieve recognition. It implies that women are the author of their own fates, which appears to place undue stress on agency and not enough on structure. Pushing against the grain of patriarchy within a nationalist movement requires not just a feminist consciousness, but power. Women participate in ethnic and national process in a number of ways: as biological reproducers of the ethnic community, as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic or national groups, as key actors in the transmission of the community’s values, as markers of ethnic or national distinctive and as active participants in national struggle. The intermeshing of sexism and racism is of particular relevance for ethnic minority women. They possess only limited citizenship rights, leaving them exposed to exploitation in the employment process (**Wilford, 1997**).

**Gender is an important principle of social life and relations, and sociological vantage** points represent the most useful way to understand these issues. (Sociology offers the most useful vantage points from which gender can be understood.) Sociology does not provide the only access to the social world. Fiction, music, and art- all may provide people with meaningful insights about their lives. The power of sociological knowledge stems from the field’s ‘intellectual social location’. The sociology of women has gradually given way to sociology of gender. So the sociological study of gender is relatively new/young. Recent developments in this field include greater attention to men and masculinity, attention to variations within and between gender categories, and a desire to rethink important sociological concepts and ideas from a gender perspective. Gender remains a central organizing principle of modern life. In virtually every culture, gender difference is a pivotal way in which humans identify themselves as persons, organize social relations, and symbolize meaningful natural and social events and process. Gender used to be as the psychological, social and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness. In other words, it represented the characteristics taken on by males and females as they encountered social life and culture through socialization.

However, “a working definition of gender” is viewed gender as a “system of social practices”; this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it “organizes relations of inequality on the basis of these distinctions.” In this view, gender involves the creation of both difference and inequalities. The three broad frameworks (individualist, interactional, and institutional approaches) have been used for understanding gender. Gender is reflected in who people are or how they behave; it is something that individuals possess as a part of themselves and that accompanies them as they move through life. This “something” may be understood in terms of masculinity or femininity, or it may be defined more specially in terms of particular qualities or characteristics. However, gender is understood as something that resides in the individual.

This way of thinking about gender is called individualist perspective. The distinguishing characteristics, which include chromosomal differences, external and internal sexual structures, hormonal production and other physiological differences, and secondary sex characteristics, signify sex. The claim that sex marks a distinction between two physically and genetically discrete categories of people is called sexual dimorphism.

Many view sexual dimorphism in human as a biological fact; they believe sexual differentiation creates two “structurally distinguishable” categories of humans. In addition to the concept of sex, sociologists also use terms such as sex assignment or sex category. These concepts describe the processes through which social meanings are attached to biological sex. Sex assignment refers to the process-occurring at birth or even prenatally- by which people are identified as male or female (their sex category). Here, several types of “individualist” approach with criticisms are clear to all. Used extensively by gender scholars, these perspectives have a long history of research and development. Individualist approaches treat gender as a characteristic of people. Proponents of this view focus their attention on women and men- their traits, characteristics, and identities- and suggest that gender operates primarily through these aspects of individuals. Examples of individualist approaches include sex difference research, biosocial and evolutionary psychology perspectives, and theory and research on gender socialization. Ultimately all of these perspectives explore how much people’s personal characteristics traits, behaviors, and identities- are shaped by our sex category. They share a belief that people are gendered-that is, that the distinction between masculine and feminine in one that is expressed in individuals. In addition, most agree that sex distinctions are a primary reason for this.

Sex, then, is a source of gender and sets limits on the traits, behaviors, and identities of people. Further, because gender is part of the person, it is assumed to be relatively stable, internal, and unchangeable. People do not put on and take off gender as they move from place to place, situation to situation, group to group. Integrationists believe that situational characteristics interact with, and sometimes offset, internalized personality attributes and behavioral dispositions to create gender distinctions. Gender is a system of social practices that constitutes people as different and that organizes relations of inequality. Integrationist approaches to gender focus less on individuals and more on the social context within which individuals interact. Integrationists focus on the social relations that produce gender distinctions and inequalities.

The key perspectives within this tradition include ethno methodology (“doing gender”), status characteristics theory, and research on homophily. Though they differ in important respects, the process of social categorization is central to all three perspectives. The interactionist perspectives agree that social categorization, particularly sex categorization, is an important social process.

In addition, all three approaches emphasize the ways that gender emerges and is reproduced in social interaction. In this way, they diverge from individualist approaches, which see gender as residing primarily within individuals. Interactionist approaches are a useful counterpoint to individualist understandings of gender. While individualists see gender as a relatively stable property of people, interactionist approaches emphasize the ways that social context and social interaction influence the expression and significance of gender. From a gendered institutions perspective, gender socialization is a less important source of gender distinctions than are features of social structure and social organization. Institutional perspectives focus on gender as aspects of social structure and culture. Institutional perspectives thus direct attention to the practices and policies of organizations, and to the material and symbolic dimensions of large-scale social institutions, such as education, work, or family; institutions are an important source of beliefs about gender. The institutional structures of the society are organized along the lines of gender. These institutions have been historically developed by men, currently dominated by men, and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically. Actually, aspects of social life that are conventionally treated as “genderless” or gender-neutral are, in fact, expressions of gender.

This way of thinking about gender directs attention to the organization, structure, and practices of social institutions which produce and reproduce gender distinctions and inequality. In addition, because they tend to be self-perpetuating, institutions play a central role in the perpetuation of gender distinctions and inequalities. However, none of this approach alone is sufficient. Instead, gender is a multilayered system of practices and relations, operating at the individual, interactional, and institutional levels. No discussion of gender would be complete without attending to work and family spheres directly affect the daily lives of adult women and men, and their children. Work, family and gender, have been intertwined historically. As the organization of work and family, lives have changed, so too, have women's and men's lives. Beliefs about gender about what men and women are and should be are conditioned by these institutions.

Throughout history and the world, division of labor has developed along the lines of sex. The sexual division of labor refers to the process through which tasks are assigned on the basis of sex. The origin of the sexual division of labor is in the fact that women historically have had primary responsibilities for the care and rearing of children which shapes the type of labor women can perform while men are treated as bread winner. This aspect of the sexual division of labor is a key feature of a gendered institutions and the family also gendered institution. Socialization is one process through which people become gendered. The psychological rewards of marriage also differ by sex. Bernard "shock theory of marriage" posits that marriage requires women to accommodate more to men than vice versa. Bernard claimed that marriage was more of a "shock" for women than men.

Married women are generally more psychologically distressed than single women and married men and married women have to make greater adjustments than their partners. Jobs, occupations, work roles, and work relation are laden with gender meanings. In this way, specific work roles, jobs, and occupations come to be seen as more appropriate for one gender than another. On both counts, gender-typing privileges men and masculine activities and penalize women and feminine activities. Women earn less than men. Activities performed by women tend to be viewed as worth less than those performed by men. In this respect, gender is a highly institutionalized feature of the modern workplace. Gender is a powerful principle of social life which operates at the individual, interactional and institutional levels.

It is multilevel system of social practices that produces distinctions between women and men, and organizes inequality on the basis of those distinctions. Gender is reproduced through the forces of institutionalization and legitimating. It makes them especially difficult to eliminate; they are taken for granted as “just the way things are.” All inequalities must be legitimated; ideologies help provide this legitimation by supplying accounts that make inequality seem fair and reasonable. Gender inequalities are legitimated through the twin ideologies of paternalism and deference. These ideologies lead men and women to view each other as different in important ways, but they do not necessarily view the other group as an adversary. Gender differences are celebrated, while gender inequalities are downplayed. The key to creating gender equality is to make gender a less influential factor in shaping social life than it is today. Reducing the importance of gender will contribute to a lessening of gender inequality. Reducing gender inequality will help reduce gender distinctions (Wharton, 2005).

**Women’s movements have had formal international ties since 1902 when the International Woman Suffrage Alliance was organized.** In the late twentieth century, globalization of the economy, technology, information, and politics made connections among women more widespread. International meetings became important to women’s movements from the mid-1970s. These meetings were the occasion for publishing statistics on women in individual nations and evaluating women’s situation globally. They provided publicity for the incredible poverty of most women, their victimization physically and politically, and the need to remedy these harsh conditions. Global organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch came to see that their work had focused too strictly on male political prisoners, the treatment of combatants, and other issues relating only to men. Human rights are defined in a variety of ways, from the right to food and shelter to a life free from violence and abuse. Women’s failure to enjoy equal human rights emerged from the interactional conferences like in Nairobi, Houston, and Beijing - as a common bond for women in countries of the North and south alike. Since World War II, the accompanying rape has disproportionately impacted women. Domestic violence and rape in the course of everyday life constituted another common threat and one that seemed a progressively greater threat. The international human rights movement focused primarily on the states infringement of public civil rights, including the right to free expression, to political association, and to a fair trial.



It ignored to intervene, however, when violations occurred within the private sphere of the home and when not directly caused by the state. Many human rights violations against women, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, sexual slavery, forced pregnancies, and sterilization are committed within the family and by private individuals or organizations. Because they occur in private, such violations have been uncontested by human rights activities. This view of human rights reinforces the artificial distinction between the public and the private spheres and fails to take into consideration how the inaction or discrimination of the state causes violent action in the home. The women's human rights movement has called into question this artificial distinction. Informed by their demands for urgent action and by feminist critiques of the state, the movement calls attention to the state's role in maintaining and reproducing a gender hierarchy. By upholding a legislative and judicial system based almost entirely on male experiences, by attributing and enlarging the scope of male power within the family, and by failing to intervene against the status quo of women's social subordination, the state adopts and perpetuates male power.

Because the state's complicity, violence in the family can ultimately be traced back to the state and its assumptions regarding gender roles and hierarchies within the family. As a result the liberal distinction between private/family and public/state falls. Feminist scholars and activists have questioned the state's responsibility for domestic violence.

Here the state is explicitly upholding male power within the family and thereby sanctioning a double standard. Elsewhere, the state is complicit in a less direct manner: although domestic violence is penalized, the judiciary fails to prosecute such cases systematically or applies lesser sentences. In such cases, the state discriminated against its female citizens. The law reflects male experiences serves to keep women in violent relationships. In 1989, Amnesty International, probably one of the most globally renowned non-governmental human rights groups, finally began to focus on the issue of violence against women. It concluded that women suffer more violations of human rights than any other group in the world, both in times of war and through traditional practices excused by culture. Although we criticize the 1995 Amnesty International reports silence on domestic abuse, we also point to its more radical position on asylum and refugee laws. Amnesty International relies on an implicit model of a female gendered subject who is passive and dependent on paternal instances.

Forcing the international community to recognize rape-even if only in conflict situation-as torture and a crime is in itself a significant step in a world that continues to ignore this form of systematic violence against women. Likewise, intervening in the illegal arrests, tortures, and extra judicial executions of political and social activities cannot be minimized. An independent women's movement with its own mandate and commitments must and will continue to grow. Feminist activities from around the world who want to affirm their solidarity with local struggles should take their cues from the grassroots movements, allowing them to define the agenda for the movement in a manner relevant to their local, cultural, and national contexts. In doing so, they should also exert pressure on Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations to recognize the demands of these groups and to continue to rethink the limitations that its founding charter imposes on the women's human rights movement. This political agenda should, finally, also inform the work of continuing scholarship on the concept of 'human rights', on the division between the public and the private, on the relationship between the family and the state with specific reference to violence against women. What is at stake here is more than Amnesty International's mandate, more than feminist scholarship on the family, more than the success of different grassroots movements for women's rights. It is the articulation of new forms of knowledge and of politics for a more just and equitable society (Bahar, 2000).

**Women's Studies 'Understanding' 'Awareness' and 'Action'- this interconnection imply** that women's studies is engaged in an explicit process which address the connections between our lives, experiences and activism. In the context of south Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka the words 'feminism' and 'feminists' have become emotive words that often evoke hostile reactions. Feminism is generally thought of as a phenomenon, rooted in Western society. The concept of feminism has also been the cause of much confusion in third world countries. Actually, feminism means an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in the society, and conscious action by women and men to change the situation. Feminism is a humanistic concern, implying that half of the human race is being denied their rightful place in society, and feminism is to restore that place to them- that is restore to the women their actual place in society.

The status of men and women has been constructed around a whole series of dichotomies as follows:

1. One - the other;
2. Work - Home;
3. Public - Private;
4. Mind - Body;
5. Rational - Emotional;
6. Culture - Nature;
7. Autonomy - Dependence

The first one of each pair tends to be associated with men and positively valued, while the second is associated with women and negatively viewed. There are four approaches by which we can study women: the evolutionary approach, the structural approach, the productive approach, and the traditional, cultural and religious approach- all these approaches are the causes of women's subordinate position in the family and society leading to their subordination, oppression and poverty. In agricultural society mainly in South Asia, women's status deteriorates as land and economic surplus become concentrated in the hands of men.

The colonial experience in Africa greatly diminishes the position of women through the privatization and ownership of land, which eliminated their right to land, relegated them to the private sphere. Throughout the world women continue to face inequality in all spheres of life; they are discriminated and subordinated in relation to men. Patriarchy is identified as the main reason for women's subordination, inequality and poverty in South Asian context. Patriarchy is best defined as control by man. Both in the developed and developing countries, the culture is patriarchal.

Men have the power and control over women. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women. In a patriarchal system women's lives are controlled by men in the following areas: women's productive or labor power, women's reproduction, control over women's sexuality, women's mobility, property and other economic resources. There are certain institutions which are patriarchy in nature and exert control over women: family, religion, legal system, economic institutions, political system and institutions media, educational institutions and knowledge system.

'Feminization of poverty' has been used to mean three distinct things: Women have higher incidence of poverty than men; women's poverty is more severe than that of men; there is a trend to greater poverty among women, particularly associated with rising rates of female headship of household.

Women's access to the needed resource and service is much less than men and it contributes immensely to make women "the poorest of the poor". There are three main strategies of development: Trickle-Down strategy. Basic Needs strategy and structural Adjustment Programme. All these three main strategies of development clearly indicate that women have been marginalized by the three models. But at the same time these models have benefited men. Feminism is a movement, a set of beliefs that problematize gender inequality. The Women in Development (WID), whether it's scientific, political or popular from, has definitely drawn the world's attention to the fact that women represent powerful human resource in development. The term "Women in Development" was coined in the early 1970s by the WID caucus group within the Society for International Development (SID), popularly known as the SID/WID group. The crucial impetus to the WID movement was provided by the adoption of WID concepts by two organizations namely, the United States Women's Movement and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). The meaning of WID may be explained as economic development, equality in rights and education, equal employment opportunity and empowerment.

As a result of shortcomings and consequent criticisms leveled against the WID approach, the Women and Development (WAD) approach arose in the latter part of the 1970s. WAD is primarily a Neo-Marxist feminism approach with a strong emphasis on the importance of social class and exploitation of the third world. Gender and Development (GAD) approach evolved from the WID in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the aim for full equality of women within the framework of economic development. The Women, Environment and Sustainable Development approach came out as a result of women's experiences in third world social movements such as the Chipko and Green Belt Movements. This approach covers a variety of issues including forestry, agriculture, irrigation, and water systems. Women's relation with the environment is viewed in the perspective of economic development and the many harmful effects that environmental degradation has on women's lives. Gender is a key organizing concept of institutions and practices in culture and society. Worldwide, violence against women is an impediment to women's equality.

Different categories of gender-based violence condition every woman's life and dominate the lives of millions of women, impeding both their personal development and the contribution they can make to the lives of those surrounding them. In Bangladesh women perform within strict rules of patriarchy structures, norms, values and attitudes that restrict women's participation in governance, administration, development and political activities. The most majority of South Asian women are illiterate, in poor health, invisible in the system of national accounts, and suffer legal, political, economic and social discrimination in all walks of life. Women in South Asia also have the lowest rates of participation in politics, administration decision making and governance structures. Gender and globalization, focuses on women's marginalization and advancement. Empowerment of women emphasizes on the use of the concept of 'power' as it is used to understand empowerment of women. The changing paradigms such as education, health and violence against women are used as instruments and weapons to achieve empowerment. Discrimination against women is still widespread. In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time women's own knowledge, abilities and coping mechanism often go unrecognized. Violence against women remains a global phenomenon. There is continuous barrier to women's advancement in government, politics and business. Over the past 40 years.

World conference on Women, held in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi have contributed to the progressive strengthening of the legal, economic, social and political dimensions of the role of women. International Conferences held during the last decade of the 20th century, such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), have all highlighted at international level the various outstanding issues related to the improvement of the status of women. The global process has led to the advancement of women throughout the world and the national process in Bangladesh has brought about women's development, advancement and achievement in all spheres of life. However, to encourage and strengthen Partnerships and cooperation between the Government and NGOs, women's organizations, civil society is needed to form a common agenda and common platform in the implementation of commitment made at the Fourth world Conference on Women and at other United Nations World Conferences, Summits, MDG goals, in order to promote gender equality, development and peace and achieve empowerment of women in the twenty first century (**Mahtab, 2012**).

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL**  
**FRAMEWORK**

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

#### 3.1.1 Theoretical Framework

Theory is needed to know the causes, range and process of discrimination and its impacts in society. Without a theory in conducting studies, the researcher may not find interpretable results. Through the review of relevant literatures, this study has determined and explained two major approaches for better understanding the broader ideas and issues of gender discrimination and support the researcher in choosing patriarchy theory as a theoretical base for this study.

##### 3.1.1.a Masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity:

Theorists of masculinity attempt to abolish patriarchal ideology from masculinity holding the view that patriarchy exposes the imbalance expression of masculinity. Negative impacts of masculinity are nothing but the result and function of patriarchy. A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct, men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life”(Hofstede and Hofstede,1999:120).

Gramsci first introduced the concept of hegemony in 1955 and contributed to marks is thinking in relation to win and capture of power and thus the formation and destruction of social groups. In a word, it reveals the system through which the dominant class constructs and continues its domination. Hegemony seduces major portion of population especially through the media and social institutions which seems natural and normal. Hegemonic masculinity is a technique for making subordination of women. According Connell, Lee, Carrigan, Cockburn, Messner, Chapman, Lichterman and Rutherford, hegemonic masculinity concerns the dread of and the flight from women (In Donaldson, 1993: p. 647).According to Raewyn Connell, the idea of masculinity is not only to show the relation between men and women but also among or between men in line with class, ethnicity, race, disability and sexuality. The term “hegemonic masculinity” was first introduced in the 1980’s on the basis of expected male gender performance.

In the very beginning of this theory, the concept was defined as the system of practice that motivates and perpetuates male's dominance over women (Gesualdi, 2013 :306) Hegemonic masculinity is the most powerful expression of manhood (Allen, 2010, in Gesualdi, 2013: 306). "Beyond individual practices of men, hegemonic masculinity is characterized as an encompassing institutionalized ideology that promotes men's dominance over women and even other men who do not perform to the most privileged from" (Gesualdi, 2013 :306). According to Connell (1987) "Hegemony is a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into organization of private life and culture processes (Connell, 1987).

Hegemonic masculinities are standby in the society through educational institutions, religious institutions and media representations which is almost identical to the Gramsci's theory about the tyrannical rule of assertive ideas (Bates 1975, in Gesualdi2013:206). The characteristics of masculinity are absolutely accepted throughout the world, due to the over existence of masculine approaches and practices in the above mentioned social institutions (Hanke 1998 in Gesualdi, 2013). The hegemonic masculinity theory of Connell emphasized that certain attempts to determine gender dissensions on the basis of cultural aspects is a process to protect the privileged position of men in the society (Sam de Boise,2013).

Without considering the issue on the dynamics of structural and historical change the theory of hegemony would be termed to a simple model of cultural control (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Ethnographic and interview studies traced the institutionalization of hegemonic masculinities in specific organizations (Cheng; 1996; Cockburn 1991 in Connell, 2005) and their role in organizational decision-making (MESSERSCHMIDT, 1995). The theory of masculinity is subject to change and applicable in diverse cultural settings with mostly relevant to practical issues.

### **3.1.1.b Why is Not Hegemonic Masculinity?**

According Connell and MESSERCHMIDT (2005) the five principal criticisms of hegemonic masculinity approach are:

- 1. The Underlying Concept of Masculinity:** Collinson (1994) and Hearn (1996) criticize the concept of masculinity as it is uncertain in expressing real meaning and tends to provide less emphasizes on the issue of control and domination.



It is also criticized as it emphasizes overly in explaining male-female differences and excluding identification of gender categories.

- 2. Ambiguity and Overlap** There is no unique and ideal type of hegemonic models (Donaldson 1993) that can be applied at a particular time and place (Martin, 1998). In this point of view, Edley (1999) and Whitehead (1998) also criticized hegemonic model or pattern as ambiguous and overlapping concept.
- 3. The problem of Reification:** “Holter (1997, 2003) argues that hegemonic masculinity constructs masculine power from the direct experience of women rather than from the structural basis of women’s subordination. He also stated that it is not logical to draw among masculinities from the direct exercise of personal power by men over women; rather institutionalization of gender inequalities, the role of cultural constructions, and the interplay of gender dynamics with race, class, and region also play key role in maintaining male’s domination over women.” (Holter, 1997 and 2003, in Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).
- 4. The Masculine Subject:** The concept of hegemonic masculinity can see only structure, making the subject invisible (Whitehead, 2002 in Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In addition to discursive perspectives, gender relations are also constituted through non-discursive practices i.e. violence, sexuality, domestic labor, child caring and rearing as well as stereotype roles of male and female (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).
- 5. The Pattern of Gender Relations:** Most of the theorists have a common tendency to show gender relations as self-contained, self-reproducing system and explaining every component in terms of its function in reproducing the whole. However, men’s domination and women’s subordination constitute a historical process, not a self-reproducing system. So, hegemonic masculinity is needed to rearrange in four main areas: (1) The nature of gender hierarchy, (2) The geography of masculine configurations, (3) the process of social embodiment, and (4) the dynamics of masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

### **3.2 Patriarchy Theory**

The major theory of the origin of patriarchy, male dominating society points to social consequences of human reproduction. In the early history of human being, lack of family planning and scientific treatment caused high death rate, and for this reason maintaining a balanced population, women were forced to give birth many children. Moreover, women had to busy in domestic activities with bearing and rearing their children, as male members had been busy for hunting and other outside activities to manage necessary commodities for families. It was male who communicated with other tribes, operate business, and took risk of their lives in battle fields. They also accumulated resources through business and gained prestige as victorious persons in the battle bringing a large number captured prisoners as their slaves and animals to feed the tribe. On the other hand, women were given little prestige in the tribe as routine domestic workers without risking their lives for the groups. Eventually, men took over the society and women became second class citizens, subject to men's decisions.

#### **The View of Harris (1977)**

Male dominance may be the result of some entirely different causes. For instance, Anthropologist Marvin Harris (1977) proposed that, because most men are stronger than most women and survival in tribal groups required hand to hand combat, men became the warriors, and women became the reward that provoked men to risks their lives in battle. According to Harris, warfare and plow agriculture play key roles in emerging patriarchal ideology and women's subordination in society. Her views show or expose a strong association between male violence toward external enemies and extreme gender hierarchies, with females devalued and debased, within society. Cultural attributes are more influential factors that biological configuration regarding inequalities between men and women.

It is well known that gender discrimination in society is pervasive and pernicious forms of inequality. The term 'gender' is used as the form or system of discrimination that may occur within the society, household and family. Here that dominated male take more food and live longer in their life. However, those designated female take less food lastly, which makes them weak and tends to survive for short time. Worldwide, it is seen that the slaves, poor and lastly females lead discomfort life compare to others.

Hence, it is very difficult to distinguish between discrimination and inequality existing in the society (Miller, ed.1996:22). Males in the society or family are in dominant position and enjoy more benefits than female with respect to bio-physical structural differences and women's reproductive roles in pregnancy and lactations. Bio-sexual differences are the basis of constructing theory of gender hierarchies and patriarchy. We cannot overlook cultural materialism in analyzing the emergence and evolution of gender discrimination (Harris, 1996:57).

Less food taking contains lower protein which makes women ill and tends to reduce their effectiveness in every sphere of life. Due to male domination in decision - making, women give birth more children with life risk and higher energy cost, as they have to bear and rear their children along with them. Moreover, abortion, infanticide, hunger, malnutrition, disease make their span of life very short. Warfare promotes female infanticide, the abuse and nutritional negligence of young girls (Linden Baum, 1979 in Harris, 1979:91). "For Harris, the causes of human behavior patterns lie ultimately in the infrastructure. Actually humans behave as they are developed their ideas into the culture of society" (Allen Johnson and Orna Johnson in Harris, 1979: XII).

#### **Marx's–Engels View (1884)**

Marx's notion of "Patriarchal relations" was significantly developed by Engels in his book 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State' (1884) regarding his analysis of the family. It was the first attempt to explain patriarchy in a systematic way to elaborate the process of perpetuating male privileges. Frederick Engels proposed that patriarchy came with the development of private property, and unequal power relationship or unequal distribution of power between males and females in the family and broadly capitalism. He could not explain why private property should have produced male dominance.

#### **Gerda Lerner's View (1986)**

Gerda Lerner (1986) suggests that patriarchy may even have had different origins in different places. She added "In no society women play a pivotal role in decision-making and even they have more decision-making power than men". She also added women are like satellites without any light of their own, they shine only when the sun light touches them. Thus women are depended on male if they are not established in their life (Lerner in Bhasin, 1993: 16).

The history of the past of mankind is only partially recorded which focuses only the male-half of the human race which is also distorted in favor of male, as male dominant document and history excluded women because of her sexual identify. The male's control over woman's sexual and reproductive roles originated before the origin of private property and class society. However, the nature of domination, in fact, lies in the heart of private property. Historically, the process of formation of state can be traced in the form of patriarchy which tends in keeping patriarchal family structure (Lerner, 1986). Moreover, the tendency of dominating women by male was institutionalized through their earlier practices. Thus, "Women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the earliest law codes, and enforced by the full power of the state.

Women's cooperation in the system was secured by various means : force, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and the artificially created division of woman into respectable and not-respectable women" (Lerner, 1986, Chapter 5). In the society, the legacy of women's subordination in respect of access to material resources and sex is presently existed in the society. Although women played pivotal roles as the mediators between humans and Gods and worshiped by male in the earlier period, finally women have been transformed into the wife and priestesses of male gods in the society.

In this connection decision-making power, access to resources, creativity, social and family controlling power is ascribed to male gods (Lords-Kings) whereas female sexuality becomes associated with sin and powerless evil. Only female can have access to the gods and holy ceremonies as mothers without entering into the praying place. Aristotle's philosophy assumes that women are incomplete and they damaged human beings in different orders than male. Thus women's subordination has become natural, and hence it is invisible in the society and family which finally establishes patriarchy as a theory and ideology (Lerner, 1986: 8-10). From very earlier period of mankind, biological differences create gender division of labor i.e. men as hunters and warriors and women as food gathers, service providers and reproductive agents on the basis of their strengths and endurance. (ibid: 41-42).

The context of male's ego formation took place in respect of fear and owe, and social institutions are created and validated by male to keep up their egos, confidence and sense of worth.

According to Lerner, the women and children are important for agriculture and production process; however, males who contribute in the knowledge of production, wield controlling power over young men, food and women. In her opinion, women's involvement in the harvesting process of agriculture started with the purpose of more production through the availability of labor, which tends to strengthen the household structure. "In most societies, women are more vulnerable to becoming marginal than are men. One deprived of the protection of male kin, through death or, separation, women become marginal and vulnerable" (Lerner, 1986).

Whatever its origins, historical background of human living pattern shows the evolution of patriarchy in society. Thus, men came to think themselves inherently superior than women based on the evidence that they hold higher position in society. Even today, patriarchy is rooting permanently in society in new form with cultural supports such as designing particular activities that are not appropriate for women.

The origins of patriarchy are closely related to the concept of gender roles or the set of social and behavioral norms that are considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. Much work has been done to understand why women are typically thought to inhabit a domestic role, while men are expected to seek professional satisfaction outside the home. This division of gender roles established a social hierarchy in which male's freedom to work outside the home and presumed control over women is perceived as superior and dominant. As such, rather than working to destabilize the historical notion of patriarchy, much literature assesses the origins of patriarchy, or a social system in which the male gender role acts as the primary authority central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege and entails female subordination.

### **Steven Goldberg's View (1973)**

Biological explanation of gender roles got immense importance in traditional searching, though the concept is less popular in modern academic circles. Before the nineteenth century, this conversation was primarily theological and deemed patriarchy to be the natural order. The modern term for understanding biological explanation to explain social phenomena is socio-biology. Socio-biologists mainly used genetic approach to explain social life, including gender roles. They argued that patriarchy established in social structure as a result of inherent biology rather than social conditions.

One such renowned biologist is Steven Goldberg. In 1973, he published “*The Inevitability of patriarchy*”, which fostered a biological interpretation of male dominance in society. Goldberg opined that male dominance is a universal phenomenon in human society as a result of male’s biological make up. Every society socializes male with aggressiveness while females with soberness. In this way, girls become away from their careers and competition with men. Here, they suffer from low status and insubordination with maternal and nurturance roles compare to male (Eleanor Leacock, 1974 in S. Goldberg, 1973: 204).

These socio-biological theories of patriarchy are counter balanced by social constructionist theories that emphasize how certain cultures manufacture and perpetuate gender roles. According to social constructionist theories, gender roles are created by individuals within a society who choose to encourage a particular structure with meaning.

#### **Kate Millet’s View (1968)**

Gender politics mean power-structured relationships among male and female in the entire arrangement where one group is dominant and other is subordinate. In patriarchal societal culture exposes the domination of rule-making power of husbands over their wives (Millett 1968). “Women have been placed in the position of minority status throughout history and even after the grudging extension of certain minimal rights of citizenship and suffrage at the beginning of this century” (Max Weber in Millett, 1968). Culture is defined by male and it has been evolved through myth and superstitions where a different type of male dominating approaches and mechanisms are institutionalized as unbreaking rules. Here males are seen as innocent as culture compels them to dominate over females. Primitive societies have been studied with a number of examples of taboos and cultural practices against women such as during menstruation, women are untouchable and unclean; they will not touch their male members, and cannot go to the sacred and ritual places. Fearing the power of reproductive role of women as super natural, males impose a thousand of taboos to make women as subordination. Because of male propaganda, religion has become a patriarchal agent that prohibits female to upheld discrimination. Actually, social behavior and psychology is determined, fixed and conformed by religion. Contemporary media is another important weapon of patriarchy to portray the stereotype role of women (ibid).

Religion prevents women from participation in politics. At the same time, socio-economic-cultural oppression ultimately leads to psychological oppression of women through patriarchy. From the early life, every girl child is trained up and socialized to be incompetent at every sphere of life which convert them into a sex 'Object' or a 'Thing' (Millett, 1968).

### **Sylvia Walby's View (1989)**

The concept of patriarchy is an essential tool in the analysis of gender relations and it is vital for feminist analysis. Patriarchy implies a theory of gender inequality in which this aspect of men's domination over each other is central to men's domination over women (Walby, 1989). Patriarchy refers to a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position, as heads of households (Weber, 1974 in Walby, 1989:214). Patriarchy incorporates generational hierarchy among men (Hartmann, 1979 and 1981 in Walby, 1989:214) which is not central to her theory of patriarchy that focuses upon men's organizational ability to expropriate women's labor in paid work, and hence in the household (Walby, 1989). Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women, (Walby, 1989: 214).

The changing form of patriarchy is different from its creation or demise (Barrett 1980 and Mann 1986). The two systems i.e. patriarchy and capitalism are interrelated and symbiotic that they are similar one. Patriarchy provides a process of domination and regulations while capitalism imposes a system of economy for profit (Eisenstein, 1981 in Walby, 1989:215). According to Mitchell the term gender is explained with two distinguished systems: capitalist relations determine the economic level, and the law of patriarchy provides the unconscious level (Mitchell, 1975 in Walby, 1989:215). Women are exploited by men in both household work and paid work, and the above mentioned forms of exploitation influence each other, and create women's vulnerability and disadvantaged position in paid work, family and marriage. Furthermore, male-dominant society excludes women from better jobs, and in some cases, gets strong support of the state (Hartmann, 1979).

In order to understand the transformation of sexual division of labor, it is essential to explain the separation of patriarchy and capitalism. Women are generally paid low wages, so the owners show interest to employ women and husbands support this system considering this as a mechanism of exploitation and control over women in household.

Many writers have constructed patriarchal ideology on the basis of single major issue which tends to create some difficulties for arranging of the argument, i.e. Firestone (1974) uses reproduction as the base; Delphy (1984) takes the notion of women's expropriation in the labor market; and Brownmiller (1976) uses men's violence. This tendency of using one basic notion may lead to create an ahistoric and universalistic theory of patriarchy.

Furthermore, most of the writers jointly claim that the nature of patriarchy varies across time and space (Walby, 1989). Foord and Gregson (1986) specify four forms of relation as the necessary part of patriarchy; i.e. biological reproduction, heterosexuality, marriage, and the nuclear family. However, some questions arise regarding the four forms: all people are not playing reproductive role; not all involve in heterosexual relations. They may be universal as institutions, but they have varying places in a patriarchal system (Walby, 1989:219). According to Walby, "There are six patriarchal structures that form a system of patriarchy:

1. Patriarchal mode of productions: (i.e. men's confiscation over women's paying labour, non-paying household activities, bearing caring children, cooking, cleaning because of husband's effective possession of the benefits of all types of women's labour through marriage; this division of labour exposes discrimination between men and women affecting social relations which finally leads to significant inequality between them).
2. Patriarchal Relations in paid work: (i.e. exclusion of women from paid work, occupational segregation, devaluation of women's labor and low wages, which becomes a social fact in domestic and other spheres of gender relations).
3. Patriarchal state: One of the most important patriarchal structures is the state itself either capitalist or socialist. Because of patriarchal nature of the state, women are excluded from access to state resource and power i.e. low participation in politics and decision-making, legislative and judiciary, police and legal system.
4. Male violence: Men commit violence over women because of patriarchy as a social structural nature. Violence explicit in different forms and practices such as rape, wife beating, incest, flashing, sexual harassment at work, sexual assault. These types of violence occur frequently due to lack of state intervention (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984 in Walby, 1989:225) and tolerance by the



patriarchal state which legitimates certain forms of violence against women in specific contexts (Jackson, 1978 in Walby, 1989:225).

5. Patriarchal relations in sexuality: Another important patriarchal structure is sexuality in the formation of social relations rather than social customs.

Mackinnon observes that men are able to control and dominate women through means of women's subordination; sexual identity constructs women as women and men as men. Sexuality is the way in which genders are socially identified and constructed (Mackinnon, 1982:2 in Walby, 1989:226).

6. Patriarchal Culture: Patriarchal culture is a structure which is composed of a relatively diverse set of patriarchal practices and institutionally rooted rather than as ideology. Historically, religion is an important agent of patriarchy which determines the appropriate manners for both men and women. However, the patriarchal religions conducts vary from men to women while men are in dominant position and women in subordination. The male-dominated patriarchal structure of education treats men and women into a different way.

Hence women are considered as low potentials providing men with more credentials. So, the education system of patriarchal social structure implies opportunity against women fiercely with respect to the meritorious capability of men (Walby, 1989). Women in our society are facing two forms of patriarchy, i.e. private and public forms. "Private patriarchy is based upon household production as the main site of women's oppression. Public patriarchy is based principally in public sites such as employment and the state. In private patriarchy the principal strategy is exclusionary; in the public it is segregation and subordinating" (Walby in Mahtab, 2012: 30).

**Although the researcher** has discussed the masculinity approach to deal with gender discrimination in Manipuri community of Bangladesh, it does not provide the discriminatory patterns in broader perspectives and the policy initiatives have not come from this approach precisely. Hence, the researcher has applied patriarchy approach for its well-organized relevant issue and policy practices with logical ground as offered by different scholars in their literatures.

Women are discriminated in many societies which are mainly patriarchal in nature. The underlying causes of this discrimination lie in social, economic and cultural practices.

Some religions including cultural beliefs consider that the women are subordinate to men and its percolates to the children within the family through the process of socialization. So it is established in society that women are inferior to men which is the starting point of the discrimination. Bangladesh is traditionally a patriarchal society where male domination over women is largely practiced in every sphere of life.

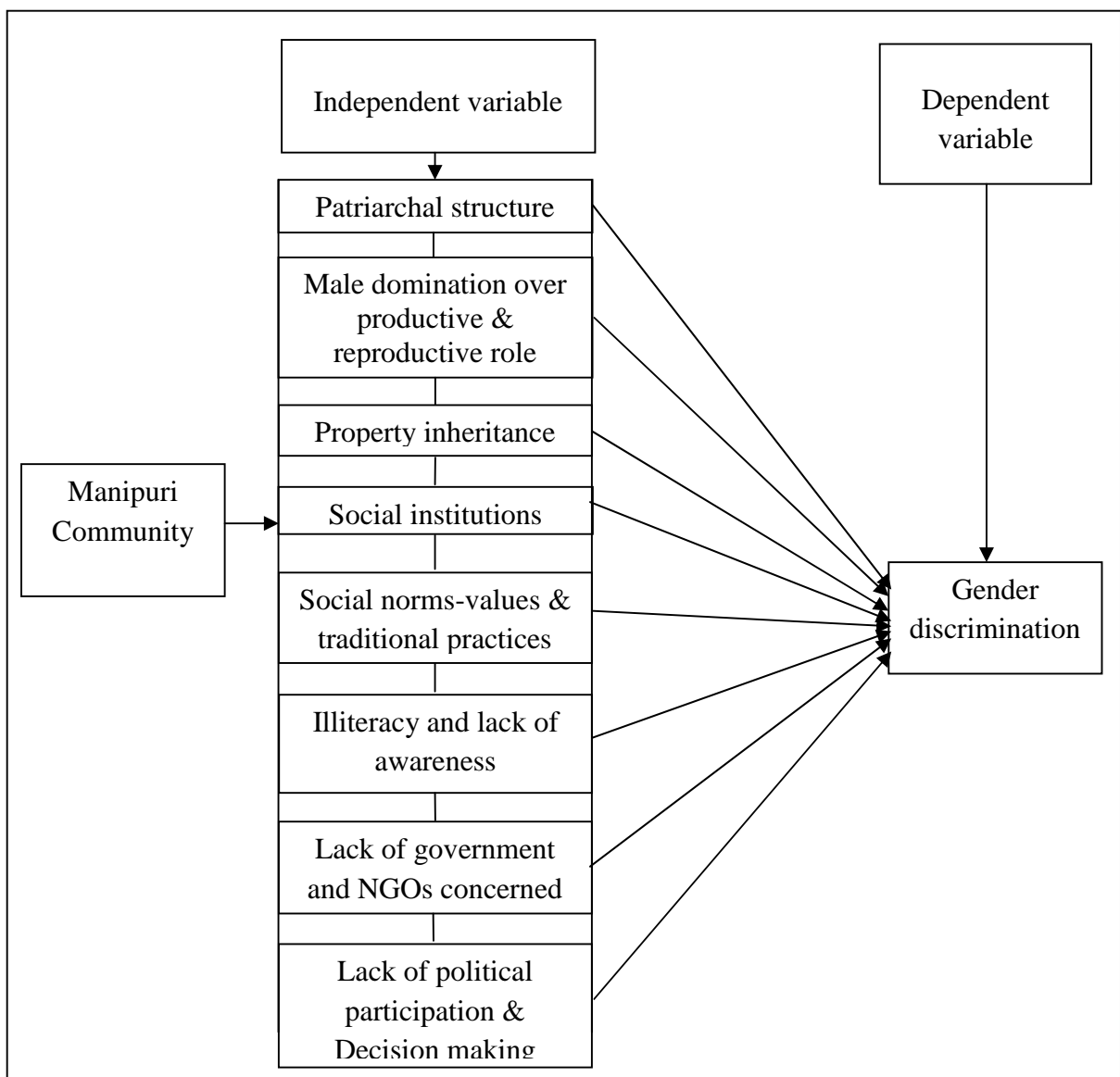
The experience of patriarchy was not the same in our grandmothers' time as it today; it is also different for tribal women. Various aspects of patriarchy that represent a specific form of discrimination as follows: son preference, discrimination against girls in food distribution, burden of household work on women and young girls, lack of educational opportunities for girls, lack of freedom and mobility for girls, wife-battering, male control over women and girls, sexual harassment at workplace, lack of inheritance or property rights for women, male control over women's bodies and sexuality, no control over reproductive rights etc. The feelings and experiences of subordination destroy self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence and set limits on women's aspirations. In a patriarchal system, men control women's productive or labor power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility and also property and other economic resources.

The main institutions in society are patriarchal in nature. The family, religion, media and the law are the four pillars of a patriarchal system and structure. This well-knit and deep-rooted system makes patriarchy seem invincible and natural (Bhasin, 1993). Patriarchal practices are present almost everywhere in the society. All the institutions of the society such as- family (the basic unit of society), religion, the legal system, the economic system and economic institutions, political systems and institutions, media, educational institutions and knowledge systems, define women as inferior to men and impose controls on women. Social relations, religions, laws, schools, textbooks, media, factories and offices are playing pivotal roles to undermine women's position in society. As a patriarchal society, Manipuri community of Bangladesh is not an exception.

Women in our society have no freedom in economy, education, decision making and especially in matter of marriage which is the turning point to reproduce the future generation. In the case of labor, women are paid less amount of money compare to men.

### 3.3 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is such a matter which discloses the summary of the research. Through the framework, cause-effect relationships between independent and dependent variables are specified. Gender discrimination in Manipuri society is the main or dependent variable and different influential factors that control the dimension of gender discrimination in the respective community are independent variables. Variables of this research work are maintained according to the following framework:



**Figure 4:** Conceptual Framework

### **3.4 Operationalization of Variables**

#### **3.4.1 Gender discrimination**

Differences between women and men are determined by biology, on the one hand, and society on the other. Sex refers to biological differences between males and females, while gender refers to the socially determined personal and psychological characteristics associated with being male and female namely, masculinity and femininity. Gender relations describe the social meaning of female and male and thus what is considered appropriate behavior or activity for women and men and to the interactions between them (Jahan, 2007). Gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman; the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. It is used as an analytical tool to understand social realities with regard to women and men (Bhasin, 2000).

Though women constitute nearly 50% of the population of Bangladesh, their situation has traditionally been adverse. In Bangladesh, women bear many of the marks of a “Disadvantaged minority” in the social, economic and political realms. The traditional society of Bangladesh is permeated with patriarchal values and norms of female subordination, subservience, subjugation and segregation. Women are found at the “bottom rung of poverty, illiteracy and landlessness”. Women are the most affected by negative impacts resulting from discrimination at birth leading to deprivation of access to all opportunities and benefits in family and social life, such as education and health. This puts them in the most disadvantageous position and also the victims of worst forms of violence. Women are the “poorest of the poor” and are the major actors in the fight for survival (Mahtab, 2007). Actually, gender differences in every society have been created and reproduced through socio-cultural, religious, political and economic factors. Gender differences are mostly learnt. However, without focusing on gender and gender discrimination, the situation of women in every sphere of life can not be properly understood and problems pertaining them cannot be remedied and improved upon (Jahan, 2007).

#### **3.4.2 Patriarchy**

Manipuri is a patriarchal society. Originally, patriarchy was used to describe a specific type of “male-dominated family” – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of the dominant male.

It refers to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. In other words, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. The subordination that we experience at our daily lives, regardless of the class we might belong to, takes various forms – discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence – within the family, at the place of work, in society. The details may be different, but the theme is the same. The broad principles of patriarchy remain the same, i.e., men are in control, but the nature of this control may differ.

### **3.4.3 Property Inheritance**

The social rules treat women differently men and generally as a subordinate. Manipuri women are still deprived of their rights. When the head of the family dies, the whole of movable or immovable property is inherited by the eldest son according to the Hindu law of inheritance (Mohen, 2005).

Generally, the sons inherit their father's property in equal proportion. Daughters have no property right in the presence of son ; but father can gift some property to the daughter if he wishes. If a Manipuri parents die remaining their unmarried daughter in the family, then some portion of father's property keep reserved to bear the expense of her marriage. A Manipuri widow achieves the guardianship over her husband's property until their children being matured (Singha, 2007). So, unequal distribution of economic power structure based on property inheritance existed in Manipuri community of Bangladesh, which may be the key point of gender discrimination.

### **3.4.4 Traditional Practices**

The Manipuris retain a strong attachment to their traditional beliefs and practices. These traditional practices instigate the gender discrimination among them, like in marriage ceremony the Fingaruk<sup>12</sup> is carried out by the woman who has already been birth her first child male. A belief goes in Manipuri society that, the women whose tuft of hair end on foot, make sound with walking, dig soil with toe-nails, furry bodies like male and sprawl in front of door at night with undo braid are the symbols of portent and poverty (Singha, 2007). A Manipuri woman is responsible for managing the household works, while maintaining and looking after her husband who supports the household.

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<sup>12</sup> A basket full of sweet , cake, and fruits

Most of the Manipuri mothers including their daughters maintain the concept of 'Lakshmi'<sup>13</sup> for prosperity or good-luck. Besides a mother is highly responsible for nursing her children and bringing them up, especially in the case of girls in the traditional society (Mohen, 2005).

### **3.4.5 Social Norms and Values**

Social norms are an accepted standard or a way of behavior or doing things that most people agree with the society. And values are related with the social goals concerning the simple and complex social wants. The values are also looked upon as ideals or models of individual and social actions. Values reflect the culture of a society and are widely shared by the members of the culture. Social values and norms are playing a crucial role in socializing a Manipuri girl and a boy. The respect for the husband by the wife is a value in the Manipuri society. Women carefully avoid calling the husbands by their names even at the cost of extreme disadvantage. They are generally loyal to the husband — loyalty being considered as one of the good qualities of a devoted wife. Manipuri women are very hard working. They manage all the domestic concerns; may more than that, they are more supporters of the families than their husbands are, and in many cases they support them entirely (Shyam Kishor, 1991).

Sometimes the birth of a daughter in family causes more worry than the birth of a son. A daughter is often taught to obey her elders strictly and sometimes is compelled to take less food, as she is to go to her husband's house as a house wife. In this way, she is trained up by her mother. So, for the rest of her life she has to remain in a subordinate position. In a Manipuri traditional family, the mother-in-law is a powerful figure, who rules the household direct on the shoulders of other women. In prosperous family, the role of mother-in-law is as strong as to influence sometimes even her husband and the management of the economy and daily life. But in a less prosperous family, a son or a housewife is more likely to establish his or her own household a few years after marriage. In that event, the power of mother-in-law is reduced and she becomes a subordinate only in her son's family. In traditional Manipuri society, the housewife usually takes less food at the last when other members have been served (Mohen, 2005).

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<sup>13</sup> Symbol of peace and property

### 3.4.6 Illiteracy and lack of awareness

The Manipuri women are more or less subject to systematic discrimination in different aspects including education, employment, development activities and social relations. Although some of them are receiving education through their own efforts, earning multilevel skills, connecting themselves with the mainstream systems; they are still left behind mainstream development (Ahmmed and Singh, 2007).

Before the 80's the number of higher secondary level girls were very few and seemed that, girls are to be sent to husband's house, and hence, higher education is not a necessity in an environment where they have to be good housewives only. After that, the situation has completely changed. Presently, college going girls are found in numbers, post-graduate students have found nil. But due to the lack of higher education among women, very few of them find access to administrative and official jobs. The knowledge about use of modern health-care and balanced diet is very poor among women. Before child-birth, 3000 and after, 2500 calories are a necessity, where a mother is given only dry fish with watery rice which carries only 1000-1500 calories. Thus, a large portion of female population faces drastic health complications, as a result of which, female death mostly occurs in her middle age (Mohen, 2005).

Due to lack of hygienic care among Manipuris, they usually depend on "Kabiraz<sup>14</sup>" and incantation (jhar-fuk<sup>15</sup>). They take herbal medicine instead of scientific medicine. In delivery case of a mother, they rely on village wet-nurse (Noukalpike<sup>16</sup>), (Singha, 2007).

### 3.4.7 Lack of Government and NGOs Concerned

The indigenous people tend to be away from the centre of power. Therefore, policy initiatives and development activities undertaken by the non-indigenous policy makers and planners usually cannot address their real needs. There are different conventions and laws ratified by the member states of the United States under its framework to protect and uphold indigenous people's right, but little improvement has been achieved.

Although the government and a few international development agencies have initiated some programs mainly addressing the needs of indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill tracts region, still the Manipuri community is largely ignored by the government's development activities like other plain land indigenous communities throughout the

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<sup>14</sup> Traditional local quack

<sup>15</sup> Spiritual belief with reciting holy book to come round from illness

<sup>16</sup> Wet nurse without having any scientific training for arrange the delivery case of pregnant women

country (Ahmmmed and Singh, 2007). If the government and NGOs (both national and international) take proper initiatives in the light of their problems, then the Manipuris will be conscious and connected to the mainstream development. It will be helpful to a great extent to minimize gender discrimination in Manipuri society.

#### **3.4.8 Lack of Political Participation**

Political participation is the foremost prerequisite of political empowerment. Naturally, the Manipuris enjoy lesser opportunities than the other communities. Their existing social and political outlooks cannot influence the nation. To Manipuri women, national politics and global outlooks are unbelievable and beyond imagination. They can think and keep themselves within the boundary walls. This is a common tendency of Third World women folk, which is aggravated by information, communication and generation gaps. Moreover, most of the young and educated Manipuri girls having brilliant caliber, also demonstrate total disinterest in political participation (Mohen, 2005). But without political empowerment of women, the radical change of gender discrimination and existing inequalities in Manipuri community is quite impossible.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**MANIPURI COMMUNITY OF BANGLADESH**  
**PART-I**  
**HISTORY OF MANIPURI SETTLEMENT IN**  
**BANGLADESH**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Part-I**

#### **MANIPURI COMMUNITY OF BANGLADESH**

##### **4.1 History of Manipuri Settlement in Bangladesh**

The Manipuris of Bangladesh belonging to the Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the great 'Mongolian' race have originated from the eastern zonal state of India, Manipur. Once upon a time, Manipur was a sovereign country. For this, they use the term 'Manipuri' as their identity. So, in order to trace the origin of the Manipuris of Bangladesh, we have to set our eyes on the former history of Manipur.

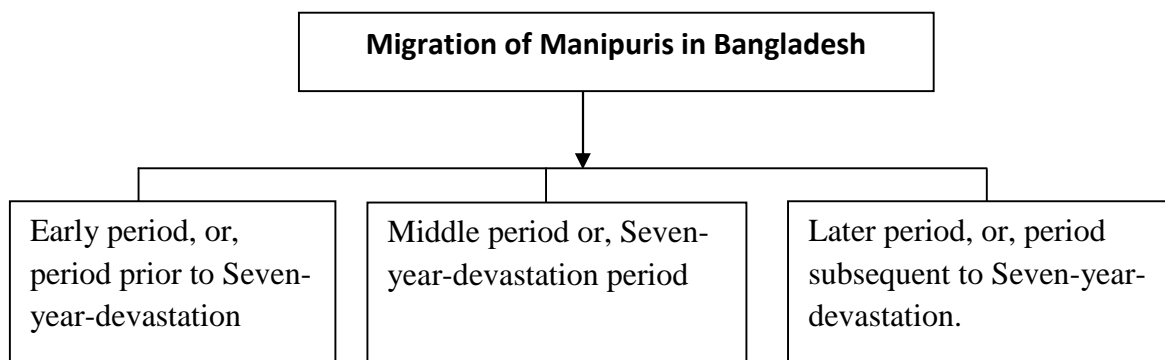
The state of Manipur was previously known by various names-Kyangleipak, Kyangkleipang, Mekhali, Meitrabak, Meitei-Leipak, Kanglei and Poirei (Kim & Kim, 2008). The naming of 'Manipur' to this land occurred in course of time and since then, the Meitei people of this land started to have been known as 'Manipuri'. As a matter of fact, the terms 'Manipur' and 'Manipuri' are of recent origin. Yet, since the term 'Manipuri' which is used to identify the Meitei has gained much wider acceptance, the epithet 'Manipuri' is being used to denote the Meitei people (Sheram, 2005). Hodson (1908) also described the Manipuris as "Meitei" and he mentioned that the Manipuris are those who call themselves Meiteis and are called by others Manipuri.

Among Bangladeshi Manipuris there is a controversy over the identification. The Meiteis, the Bishnupria and the Pangan People with the secluded ethnic background migrated to Bangladesh from the Indian state of Manipur. All these groups claim themselves as Manipuris. However, the Meiteis argue that they were the residents of the original Manipuri nation and the remaining groups were also residents of Manipur state but they were not indigenous in ethnicity and race. On the other hand, Bishnupria group also claim that they are originally Manipuri nation like Meitei but Meitei dominant documents and history degraded their status as Manipuri nations (Ahmmmed & Singh, 2007).

The Bishnupria (Manipuri) is Arzo in hereditary and this ethnographic historical identity has been developed on the basis of Arzo custom. The Bishnupria living in greater Sylhet region is called "Kalachai" and locally named as "Kalesha Manipuri" (Rahman, 2009). The Bishnupria (Manipuri) is mainly a Hindu community living mostly in the Moulvibazar district of Sylhet division.

A remarkable number of Muslims from different parts of undivided Bengal entered in Manipur for various historical reasons and settled here. At the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century, a concrete strife between the Manipuri Maharaz Khagemba and his younger brother Sanongba was exposed in Manipur. Then Sanongba fled to Cachar and invaded the Manipur state with the help of Cachar raja but failed. Again, he attacked Manipur with the joint force of Cachar and Taraf but he made the same fate. The Manipuri Raja (king) sent a large number of Cachari and Muslim soldiers of Taraf (Taraf—presently situated at Habiganj district of Sylhet division) to the prison. On the basis of a contact, the Manipuri Raja released the Muslim prisoners and gave Manipuri wives allowing permission to be settled in Manipur; at present they are known as “Meitei-Pangan” or “Manipuri Muslim” community. Besides war, travels, preaching, trade and commerce were the other reasons for spreading Islam in Manipuri community.

Historically, the political and social life of Manipuri was not always stable and peaceful. She had to pass almost all the time in wars with the neighboring countries as well as for the internal conflicts of her princes. For these reasons, the members of the royal family of Manipur and their followers migrated to Cachar, Assam and Tripura as their neighboring states. By this time, they have also settled in different places (Dhaka, Mymensingh, Comilla and greater Sylhet district) of Bangladesh. So, it is clear that the Bangladeshi Manipuris were rooted in Manipur and had not settled in different places of Bangladesh originally from Manipur state, but mostly from Cachar, Assam and Tripura. We can classify the time span of Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh into three broad periods (Sheram, 2005).



**Figure: 5** Different Periods of Manipuri Settlement in Bangladesh

#### **4.1.1 Early Period, or, Period Prior to Seven-Year-Devastation**

According to the historians, the Manipuris settlement in Bangladesh can be viewed near about 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the Tripura Census Report, it is stated: “Since the time of first Burmese war many Manipuris owing to uprising in Manipur fled away and established new settlement in Cachar, Sylhet and Tripura. Manipur and Burma were always engaged in war and conflict from very early periods. So, the first Burmese war was very important to ascertain the time of first Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh”. According to Capt. E.W. Dun, in 1755 A.D., “when Maramba or Gourashyam was on the throne, king of Burma Alongpaya or Alompra invaded Manipur and committed every kind of devastation which is known in the history of Manipur as the First Burmese War. In different Manipuri chronicles, this incident is referred to as 'Khooltak Ahanba' or the first devastation”.

D.G.E. Hall has given description of such an incident in his book 'Burma': “the expedition up the Chindwin, from which Alongpaya had been recalled in 1759, inflicted upon Manipur one of the worst disasters in its history. Imphal was occupied and thousands of people deported for settlement in the Sagaing and Amarapoora districts. Among them were boatmen, silk workers and silversmiths. From this time onwards the astrologers at the Burmese court were Manipuri Brahmins. While Manipuri formed a cavalry regiment in the Burmese Army known as ‘Cassay Horse’.”

According to Francis Hamilton- “The Manipur priest above mentioned said that the Brahmas or Burmas invaded his native country about the year 1768 and for eight years remained there committing every kind of devastation. The country previously had contained a very great number of horses and other cattle, not above one in a hundred of which was left behind. He thinks that the Burmas carried away or destroyed 3,00,000 persons of different ages and sexes, and indeed it was alleged, when I was at Ava, that 1,00,000 captives remained near the city”.

This scenario exposed the actual history of Manipuri settlement in the outside and neighboring states by leaving their homeland; but did not specify the fact regarding the Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh. The first reference we find in this respect is an incident that happened during the reign of Bhagyachandra in and around 1764-65, when one Moirangthem Gobinda, a royal man from Moirang, settled at Satgaon (Khaspur) near Srimongal of the greater Sylhet district, followed by a number of Manipuri people as a result of his dissension with the king (Sheram, 2005).

The residents of Sylhet became intimate with the Manipuri people during Pamheiba alias Garibnawaz for different reasons. Afterwards, a Manipuri king was invited to visit and stay at Sylhet for some days. But unfortunately, the Manipuri king had compelled to come to Sylhet in afraid of Burmese king. At the same time, a close friendship developed between Dewan Muktaram (Chief officer of the Nawab) and the Manipuri king and as a symbol of amity, the Manipuri king gifted two sculptures of deity to Muktaram who established the sculptures at Sadipur monastery and allotted enough land and other properties for proper maintenance of it.

During the period of Maharaja Bhagyachandra, the God-fearing ruler of Manipur with irresistible power, a Brahmin under the criminal charge of severe nature was killed by an official within his kingdom. For this, Maharaja Bhagyachandra became very shocked and decided to go to Nabadwip and spend the remaining part of his life in religious purpose absolving himself from the sin. As there was a negative mentality towards the Maharaja of Cachar leaving the direct route Khaspur, he went on a new road through the forest to the south and reached to Sylhet with 700 followers. From here, he went to Agartola and met the Raja (king) of Tripura and then reached to Nabadwip.

He stayed some days at Nabadwip and arranged to visit Brindaban through water way, but died in 1799 at Bhagabangola of Murshidabad district. On his way to Nabadwip, Maharaja Bhagyachandra was welcomed and complemented by a large number of Manipuris at different places (Bhangai, Jiri, Hilshari, Sylhet, Laksmipur, etc.). So, we can safely conclude that the Manipuri settlements in Sylhet commenced during the early part of Maharaja Bhagyachandra's rule or, earlier to that period — during the reign of Chitshai (1748-1752) or Garibnawaz (1709-1748),(Sheram, 2005). In 1804 Raja of Tripura, Ramganga Manikya, along with his younger brother Kashichandra resided at Bishgaon for some times. Bishgaon is currently located at Chunarughat Upazilla under Habiganj district of Sylhet division. Though due to adverse circumstances the settlement in Bishgaon is now decaying gradually, still now more than hundred Manipuri families are residing there.

#### **4.1.2 Middle Period or Seven-Year-Devastation Period**

At the time of going to Nabadwip, Manipuri Maharaja Bhagyachandra abdicated the throne in favour of his son Labanyachandra although the Maharaja had eight sons – Sanahal, Labanyachandra, Madhuchandra, Tulsijit, Chaurajit, Marjit, Daoji and Gambhir Singh.

From this time up to 1824, a fratricidal war broke out in Manipur and the princes were involved in the war among themselves to achieve the Royal power. Because of conspiracy, the first living son Labanyachandra was assassinated and another son Madhuchandra was dethroned and fled to Cachar in 1806. Then Chaurajit took the Royal power by appointing Marjit as his “Senapati”. But Marjit perpetrated to a dirty conspiracy against Chaurajit and occupied the Royal power with the help of Burmese king. After that, Chaurajit along with his younger brother Gambhir Singh fled to Cachar and they left Cachar for Jaintia in Sylhet to avert the adverse situation next year. Within a few days, the two brothers attacked Cachar and occupied a part of it. In 1819, the Burmese king invaded Manipur and Marjit fled to Cachar and attacked Cachar jointly with his two brothers.

Then the joint force of the three Manipuri princes easily occupied the whole Cachar and the Cachar Raja (king) fled to Sylhet. The three princes ruled the whole Cachar dividing into three parts. But their amity fell down and they revolted against each other as a result of internal feud. Lastly, they all took refuge in Sylhet.

Manipur was under the control of Burmese troops for seven years from 1819 to 1825 A.D. During this regime, the tyranny of the Burmese army reached such a stage that at least one-third of the total population left Manipur and settled in Cachar, Assam, Tripura and Sylhet to save their lives. Half the populace was killed and thousands were taken to Burma as captives. This period of oppression by the Burmese troops is known as Seven-year-devastation in the history of Manipuri (Sheram, 2005). According to Sita Ram, “at the time of invasion by the Burmese hordes, the population of Imphal was about 6,00,000. When the king of Manipur returned to his state in 1826, he found that only 2,000 people were living a miserable life in Imphal”. During this period, the Manipuri immigrants established new settlements in different places of Sylhet for the protection of life and some of them settled in Dhaka considering Dhaka as comparatively a safe and peaceful place.

The Manipuri Rajbari of Sylhet was made during this period and Maharaja Chaurajit installed the sculpture of Govindajit at Sylhet Rajbari. Then the three brothers were invited by the British officers to take the charge of Manipur state. On account of old age, Chaurajit went to Nabadwip and passed away there in 1828. Marjit also settled permanently at Bhanugach (presently located in Kamalgang thana of Moulvibazar district) and within a few years he died.

It was noticed that Manipuri Maharaja had a strong feelings for Sylhet and Bangladesh. After ascending the throne of Manipur, Maharaja Gambhir Singh again visited Sylhet and received the hospitality of Sylhet people for some days. He came to visit Sylhet in response to the request of British officers to help them against the Khasis militant. He successfully assisted the British force with a band of Manipuri Soldiers. During this period, a large number of Manipuris settled at Susang Durgapur area of greater Mymensingh district (at present under Netrokuna district). Now there is no Manipuri inhabitant in this area.

All of them migrated to Sylhet Town. The year 1938 was the last period of time when the last batch of Manipuri people of Susang Durgapur Migrated to Sylhet along with their families. Chhotodhamai area under the district of Moulvibazar is well known for a large Manipuri inhabited zone. Manik Singh bazar of this region is prominent for Manipuri settlement where they are settled under the leadership of Manik Singh, Head of a group of Manipuris. The Manipuri settlement in this area also started during the period of Seven-year-devastation (Sheram, 2005).

#### **4.1.3 Later Period or Period Subsequent to Seven-Year-Devastation**

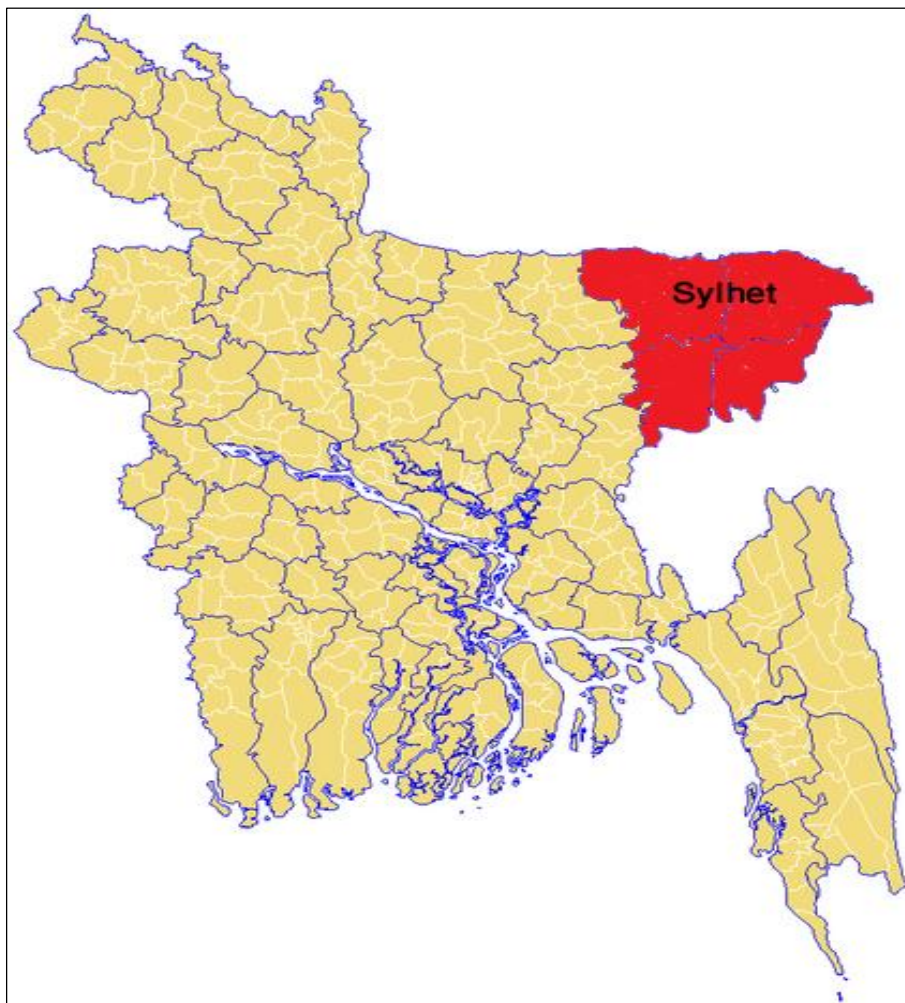
During the seven years (1819-1826) devastation of Burmese forces in Manipur state, Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh took place to a large extent. This trend also continued after 1826 when Maharaja Gambhir Singh liberated Manipur from the tyranny of the Burmese force. In course of time, this flow was gradually reduced and often reached to zero portion in the twentieth century. According to the Census Report of Sylhet, 1881, “in 1881 a total of 3,253 Manipuri who were born in Manipur were recorded. This figure came down to 336 in 1891 and in 1901 it stood to 89 only” (Allen,1905). In the census report of 1901, the Manipuri population in Sylhet, Dhaka and Mymensingh was shown as 30,000, 250 and 200 respectively (Grierson, 1904). But now, after 90 years, the Manipuri settlement in Dhaka and Mymensingh is altogether extinct and in Sylhet also, the population which was expected to increase to about two lac by this time, rather decreased to about 25,000 (Sheram, 2005).

After the death of Maharaja Gambhir Singh, Debendra Singh occupied the Royal power of Manipur in 1850. But within a few months, he was defeated by Chandrakirti and fled to Cachar and later on, took Shelter in Dhaka settling there with a large number of followers. Maharaja Debendra Singh expired at Sylhet in 1871.

So, it is evident that the Manipuri settlement in Dhaka initiated during the period of seven-year-devastation, and the main settlement took place in 1850 with the migration of the followers of Maharaja Debendra Singh (Sheram, 2005). At present, there is no Manipuri settlement in Dhaka and a few of them are dwelling in Sylhet city.

#### 4.2 Manipuri Settlement in Bangladesh

The Manipuri settlement in Bangladesh is mainly located in greater Sylhet district. In the past, we found this settlement was also extended to the regions of Dhaka, Mymensingh and Comilla. But in course of time, the Manipuri settlement at Dhaka, Mymensingh and Comilla gradually extincted with an exception of the greater Sylhet district, currently divided into four new districts (Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj). Now we shall dicuss the district-wise Maipuri inhabited areas of Sylhet division as follows:



**Sylhet Division in Bangladesh ●**



#### **4.2.1 Sylhet District**

In Sylhet district, the Manipuris are living scatteredly in different parts of Sylhet town and the outskirts of the city like Manipuri Rajbari, Kewapara, Sagardighirpar, Ambarkhana, Brajanathilla, Lamabazar, Laladighirpar, Narsinghtilla, Subidbazar, Gowaipara, Shibganj, Nayabazar and Dakshingach. There are also some areas in Sylhet where the Manipuri settlements have extincted due to adverse situation. The Manipuri settlements took place in these areas during the rule of Maharaja Garibnawaz in the early time of 18<sup>th</sup> century. But they migrated largely at the time of seven-year-devastation when the three brothers -Chaurajit, Marjit and Gambhir Singh came in this region for taking shelter at Manipuri Rajbari, Sylhet. The Manipuri people came to Sylhet in different times because of occurring several incidents in Manipur state. The trends of their arrival declined gradually but almost stopped during 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Manipuri settlers at Sylhet migrated mainly from Cachar. In course of time, those who settled in Dhaka and Mymensingh also established settlement in Sylhet regions. Despite breaking down the Manipuri settlement in Lakhat, once famous for Manipuri inhabitants, only two or three families are living there till now.

#### **4.2.2 Sunamganj District**

In Sunamganj district a good number of Manipuri families are living in Ratanpur area (Ratanpur, Dhonitila, and Baro Gaon villages) of Chhatak upazila. The migrants of this area came from Assam through meghalaya as it was assumed that most of the Manipuri settlements took places in the border zone between Bangladesh and India with an explicit exception in the case of Dhaka and Sylhet. The Manipuri settlers including Royal families of Manipur in Dhaka migrated to Sylhet due to lack of security and governmental protection. Besides Chaatak Upazila, Manipuris also lived in Gul Gaon, Gorer Gaon, Kuti para, Gazi Gaon, Ashukona, Dhighol Bagh, Panizan villages of Bishambarpur Upazilla under Sunamganj district(Singha,2014). At present, in these villages of Bishambarpur Upazilla, there is a very limited number of Manipuri settlement (one or two families) due to adverse geo-political and economic condition.

#### **4.2.3 Moulvibazar District**

Moulvibazar district is the most popular habitat for Bangladeshi Manipuri people and consequently more than 50% of the total Bangladeshi Manipuris are living in this district. Region-wise Manipuri settlements in this district can be discussed in the following way:

#### **4.2.3.a Satgaon and Srimongal Region**

Manipuri settlement in Satgaon area started during the regime of Bhagyachandra in around 1764 under the leadership of Moirangthem Gobinda. The gravestone of Moirangthem Govinda is present in view in the middle of Khaspur (Satgaon) Manipuri para (Village). Some Manipuri families are also living at Balashar and Ramnagar villages of Srimongal.

#### **4.2.3.b Bhanugach Region**

Among all Manipuris living in Bangladesh about 50% of them are residing in Bhanugach region. The places where the Manipuris living of Bhanugach region are Nayapattan, Hamomkhool, Oktrubil, Sreepur, Mangalpur, Nagar, Madhabpur, Bhanubil, Mangemakhonj, Kunagaon, Katabil, Ganganagar, Chitlia and Nandhan Leikai. From very early period, the Manipuris are living in this region. The migration of Manipuri people occurred largely in this area from Manipur, Cachar, Assam and Tripura during the period of Bhagyachandra and seven-year-devastation when Maharaja Marjit along with his younger brother Gambhir Singh and elder brother Chaurajit first took refuge to Sylhet with a large number of followers and settled here permanently. The residing place of marjit is now known as “Nagar” means capital and there is also a market namely “Ranibazar” in respect of the queen of Maharaj Marjit.

#### **4.2.3.c Naldhari and Baraitoli Region**

There are Manipuri settlements in Umangleikai, Naldhari, Baraitoli and Khunou. There had been also a Manipuri village near Baraitoli called “Somai Leikai”. These people probably migrated during the period of seven-year-devastation through Cachar and Pratapgarh regions.

#### **4.2.3.d Dhamai Region**

The Manipuri people living in this region migrated during the period of ‘seven-year-devastation’ from Cachar and Pratapgarh. The names of the Manipuri inhabited villages of this zone are Puthadahar, Pathari, Goalbari, Chhotodhamai, Houzali, Gournagar, Gournagabil.

#### 4.2.4 Habiganj District

Manipuri settlement is existed only in Bishgaon area of Habiganj district and these settlers are very old in this area. Perhaps in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Manipuris migrated and started to live here permanently. But most of the Manipuris migrated to this place during the regime of Maharaja Bhagyachandra and during the period of seven-year-devastation (1819-1826). Most of the Manipuri migrants of Bishgaon were from Tripura. Because once Bishgaon was a protion of Taraf kingdom which was a dominion part of Tripura kings. Previously Manipuri settlements were located in Gobarkhola, Jatragaoon, Fatabil, Abadgaon, Shibnagar, Khola, Katanipar, Kanthalipara, Tubatuli, Bangaon, Champaknagar, Barjum, Chhonkhola, etc. But now Manipuri inhabited areas are only Gobarkhola, Jatragaoon, Abadgaon and Shibnagar.



Manipuri settlements in greater Sylhet Division ○

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**PART-II**  
**ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MANIPURI**  
**COMMUNITY**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Part -II**

#### **4.3 Ethnographic Profile of Manipuri Community**

There are many ethnic communities living in the north- eastern region of Bangladesh; among them Manipuri is one of the most important communities living in greater Sylhet division. Like other ethnic groups, Manipuris live in their own areas with permanent settlement. North-east region has diversified ecology and is full of bio-diversity with huge natural resources. Manipuri communities have their own social traditions, cultural heritages and agricultural resources. They are living in the area with making cooperation and friendly relations to the local people. As the Manipuri people live very close to the nature, so environmental degradation and its negative impacts are threatening their lives and livelihoods. Moreover, their social traditions and cultural heritages are now under pressure, but their cultural practices are the important elements to enrich the culture of Bangladesh.

##### **4.3.1 Physical Features**

The physical features of the Meitei people prove that they are not originated in Bangladesh. Ethnologically, the Meitei belongs to the Kuki-chin group of the Tibeto – Burman family of the Mongoloid race (Biswaas, 2015). The color of the Meitei people is red and white, nose is flat and eye is small. Their height is similar to the Bengali people.

The Bishnupriya has a close genealogical similarity with the Manipuri people. The Manipuris are the part of Kuki. In the earlier time, Manipuri was known as Kasey or kthey. They strongly claim themselves as the original Manipuri in Bangladesh. Their color is golden and size is medium. Some of them are tall and bulky in size. Their hair is black and nose is flat. As the Manipuri Muslim, Pangan has their own history and culture like two other groups. Pangan People think that they have reached in Bangladesh and settled here for more than 750 years ago. Genealogically, they have come from Meitei group. They feel proud to be a part of Pangan Muslim. Their skin is white, nose is long and face is round. They are Mongoloid by their race.

### 4.3.2 Housing Pattern

As the ethnic minority group, Meitei people like to be close to the nature. They demonstrate both traditional values and scientific thoughts in designing their homes. They call the house as '**Jome**<sup>17</sup>'. Generally, their houses are made up of bamboo and soil. But, at present they are following the modern architectural design in their housing patterns particularly those who are living in city areas are interested to modern design. Their housing position is east-west. They use the east side as the entrance point and west as back side.

The pattern of the traditional house or 'Jome' is characterized by the nine-part divisions of their houses. After entering into the home from the east side there is a place at the left side called '*Pibaka*' where male member lives. The next to this place where the chief male member lives called '*Famjawga*'. The next part of this place is called '*Mamaranka*' where the mother stays with her new born baby or youngest children. There is another part of the house called '*Sanamhika*' to reserve the domestic goods and it is also used as prayer room for the family members. There is another place for the young girls, at the right side of the house considered as the most secured place. They also think for the accommodation of relatives and arrange a place for them. There is a fire place at the middle position of the house as the symbol and beliefs of keeping secured themselves from any evil eyes. The Meitei people build another prayer room besides the living homes. The prayer house is built with the help and contribution of the whole community living in a clan. They also build cooking house, latrine, and stable for animals and '*dhekihor*' for preparing variety of foods.

The housing pattern of Bishnupriya Manipuri is almost similar to those of Meitei people. But, the housing pattern of Pangan is somehow different from two other groups. Local carpenters build their houses in traditional way using tin and wood. Now-a -days they have started to build tin shed building. There are many separate rooms in their house. The front room is used as son's living room, middle one is for family head, back side room is reserved for household goods and they make special room for women. They make a mosque in the living area with the support of all Pangan Muslims within the region.

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<sup>17</sup> Local name of house or homes

### **4.3.3 Manipuris in Liberation War:**

The Manipuri people have passed through a series of difficult times from the very earlier period. They always protest against the injustice of the British and Pakistani government in this territory. In the time of liberation war of Bangladesh, they actively participated in the war against the Pakistani ruler. The Pakistani army oppressed the Bengali ethnic community in different places of East Pakistan after 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971. They killed them and made heinous harassment both physically and mentally. Many of the young Manipuris took shelter in neighboring country India where they got training and prepared themselves to fight against Pakistani Army. In Sylhet region Sree Krisno Kumar sing, Sree Sathis Chandra sing and Sree Nil Kanto Sinha contributed a lot in the liberation war and sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Bangladesh.

### **4.3.4 Language**

Manipuri language and literature is very old. The tradition and history of this language are very long and rich. The Manipuri speakers are about twenty to twenty five lac and most of them are living in Manipur state of India. Besides, a considerable number of Manipuri speakers live outside Manipur like Assam, Tripura, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Till the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Manipuri communal branch or different races were known as Meitei.

In this regard, the state of Meiteilaipak was named as ‘Manipur’ and in keeping company with British ruler Meitei language was renamed as Manipuri language. Probably in 1837, Manipuri language was introduced formally with the publication of the book “A Dictionary in English, Bengali and Manipuri” by Capt. George Gordon. It is noted that Manipuri language is used as the synonymous of Meitei language, not as the ethnographic identity of any political nationality of the Meitei. The Manipuri people of Bangladesh speak Manipuri at home as their common language and use Bengali and English outside the homes for different purposes. Written document of this language is known as “Meitei Mayek”. Mayek alphabet was named after different organs of human body. For example, the Bengali letter “Ka” is facsimile of Manipuri “Kok” which means “head”, the Bengali “Sa” for Manipuri “Somo” means “Hair” and the Bengali “Ma” for Manipuri “Mith” meaning “eye” etc. The nomenclature of Manipuri alphabet according to the limbs of human body is perhaps the exceptional illustration on the earth. At present, there are 27 alphabets in Manipuri language.

Despite having some controversies, it is generally recognized that Manipuri lipi (alphabet) originated from the Brahmi lipi (alphabet) and there is noticed similarities with Tibbati lipi (alphabet). For daily communication, the Bishnupriya use their native language. There are different opinions about Bishnupriya's language. Some scholars claimed that Bishnupriya language was a dialect of Bengali, while others said it a dialect of Asamesse language. But, the Bishnupriya disagree with that opinion and assert that their language is quite different and distinct language. There are mainly two dialects of Bishnupriya language:

- a. Rajar Gang ( King's village dialect)
- b. Madoi Gang( Queen's village Language)

Actually, they practice their language in their own community; but when they communicate outside their community, they use Bengali language. There is no written form of Bishnupriya language. They feel proud of their language as the language differentiates them from other communities and helps them to keep united in the community. The Pangan Manipuri uses both Meitei and Bengali language. They also study on English and Arabic. The aged Pangan cannot understand the meaning of Bengali language, but the young generation can speak and write Bengali and English properly. Pangan people live with the Bengali people keeping their own cultural elements in right position which are very important in their everyday life.

#### **4.3.5 Religion and Festivals**

From the Paleolithic period, Manipuris were animist and ancestor worshiper and their conversion into Hinduism was observed at high rate during 18<sup>th</sup> century. Through the matrimonial relations, a remarkable part of that population became Muslim in the Second Half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Manipuris were concentrated or assimilated according to their own way and showed an inclination creating a new dimension to the Hinduism. This Hinduism is a result of fusion of the ancient animisms with their Gods, Goddesses and myths having their own folklore and ethnicity. The fundamental patterns of Hinduism in Manipuri community with its social customs and traditions are mainly based on "Vaishnavism<sup>18</sup>". Some Bangladeshi Manipuris became Christian.

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<sup>18</sup> Religious aspect of Vaishnav



Their cultural festivals are mainly based on the traditional rituals and philosophy of the state, which are the living heritage of a nation for at least two thousand years. There are four types of religion among the Bangladeshi Manipuris, Hinduism (76.68%), Islam (18.62%), Apokop (3.53%) and Christianity (1.17%) (Rafi, 2006). They celebrate a number of festivals which are held on the basis of lunar calendar. The major festivals of Manipuris are discussed below:

#### **4.3.5.1 Ras Mela**

In the era of Maharaja Bhagyachandra (1764-1798), Ras Mela was introduced to Manipuri society. There is a common popular history regarding the inauguration of Ras mela: Maharaja Bhagyachandra took shelter to Assam as his Manipuri kingdom was attacked by the then Burmese king. A confusion was waived among the Assam Raja and the people of Assam to the identity of Maharaja Bhagyachandra as he was unknown to Assam. As a result, the Assam Raja gave him an opportunity to prove his real identity through domesticating a wild elephant which was captive into cage. Maharaja Bhagyachandra became afraid and prayed to lord Krishna throughout the night to help him. He became successful in his mission and got the appellation of honour as 'JaySingh' awarded by Assam Raj.

It is also conventional that the dress used in Ras Mela was dreamt in maharaja Bhagyachandra's dream. As a consequence of conquering the Burmese Raja, Maharaja Bhagyachandra returned to Manipur and established a temple with the idol of Shree Govindaji in accordance with the order of Lord Krishna in dream. He also devoted Ras Nritto (dance) in respect of Lord Krishna in 1779.

Since the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Manipuris settled in Bangladesh, Ras Mela has been observed at Madhabpur in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar district in Sylhet division. This fair is also popular at Tetaigaon in Adampur and Jayashree in Habiganj. A large number of Hindus come to these places from different parts of Bangladesh for enjoying the fair well. It is the most important festival and fair of Manipuris which is usually held on the night in the moonlit of Kartik or Agrahayan (Bengali Month) in Moulvibazar. This festival is given such name as it has been evolved from the spiritual 'Raslila' (love-play of Lord Krishna and his beloved Radha) and the devotion of the 'Gopis' (Companions) towards them.

The special feature of Ras Mela is the artistic choreography and rasa dance is performed by the boys and young girls with attractive costume and dress. The love story of Radha-Krishna is bloomed through music and dance in this festival.

#### **4.3.5.2 Lai-Haraoba Jagoi**

The Lai Haraoba is one of the most important and greatest festivals of the Manipuris. It reflects the whole life and entire culture of Manipuri people.

“Lai” means ‘God’, “Haraoba” means ‘pleasure’ and “Jagoi” means “dance”; so the literal meaning of “Lai-Haraoba Jagoi” is to dance with worship for the pleasure of their God ‘Sidaba’. It is said that during the early period of creation ‘Chingu Oshiba’ with the help of other Gods created the earth and animal kingdom obeying the order of prime God ‘Sidaba’. At last, they created human being following the image of the creator and elated with delightful dance for the successful art of creation. This trend of Lai-Haraoba dance is still continuing among the Manipuris for the pleasure of Gods. This festival is enjoyed for a number of days and the continuous dance of Manipuris exposes or embraces the appearance of God, creation of earth and its rotation, first introduction of human being, set up residence, agriculture, cultivation, hunting, carpentering, ownership of land and other stratum of human development. The various programs of Lai-Haraoba may be grouped into six kinds:

1. Programme one day ahead of the Haraoba;
2. Laihouba ;
3. Daily programme during the festival;
4. Lai Lam Thokpa day;
5. Lairoi (closing day programme of the Haraoba);
6. Programme following the day of Lairoi (Dhiren, 1991).

#### **4.3.5.3 Eid Festivals**

The Manipuri Pangans belong to the Islam religion as the Sunni Muslim group. As Muslims, they spiritually used to associate in various Islamic ceremonies such as Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Miladun-Nabi, Akheri-Chaha Somba, Shab-e Miraz, Shab-e Barat, Shab-e Kadr and Muharram etc. They celebrate all the rituals very peacefully and normally without any collision and extravaganza. Like Bengali Muslims, the Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha are somehow different and special to them from other festivals.

In Eid-ul-Fitr, the Manipuri Muslims keep fasting during the holy month of Ramadan from predawn to sunset with donations given to the poor only for the pleasure and satisfaction of Allah. In the morning of Eid-ul-Fitr, they take bath as the symbol of purity and wear new dress using perfumes and get together in the mosque or in an open field for a large prayer. They also visit each other's houses and share delicious dishes. In Eid-ul-Azha, the rich people perform 'qurbani' by slaughtering their cattle in the holy name of Allah. Islam is a religion with a complete code of life; it is a religion of humanity and universal brotherhood where it is seemed that there is no distinction between the rich and the poor, high and low in the eye of Allah; so the Manipuri Muslims of Bangladesh maintain a well cooperation with their neighbors (Khalique, 2005).

#### **4.3.5.4 Christmas**

The lowest portion of Bangladeshi Manipuris (only 1.17%) belongs to the Christian religion, but celebrates the Christmas days splendidly with a set of programs like prayers, reading of gospels, eating, hymn singing, lectures on Christ, sports etc. It is usually held for two days (December 24 and 25). They enjoy the days by cleaning and well-decorated houses and having various delicious dishes.

#### **4.4 Indigenous Games**

There are some games played by the Manipuris among themselves and they are the inventor of these types of indigenous games. As they are culturally rich, they are very fond of playing different types of games among and between Manipuri villages. They usually play Kang, which is the oldest and indoor game of this community. It is played under a shed of a building on an earth ground that must be plain and well-leveled. It is well marked for the respective positions of the players of both groups to hit the target. It is usually played in summer season.

The players use 'marble' and 'chakti' (made of wood) to play this game. People from two Manipuri villages arrange and take part to this competition. Now this game is often extinct. Mukna (wrestling) is an important outdoor game in Manipuri community. The game has two categories: 1. Takhatnabi (league system) and 2. Naitom (knock out system). It is well known from the history that Manipur is the birth place of 'Sagon kangjei' (polo) of the world.

It is another kind of outdoor game, which requires perfect control of the pony, the stick and the ball with proficiency of riding. It is played between two teams of seven players in each side (Haider, 2010). ‘Yubi Lakpi<sup>19</sup>’ is another interesting and attractive game of them. Players polish their body with mustard oil and water making the whole body slippery. A coconut is kept in front of the chief guest that is soaked with oil. A skilled and experienced player umpires the game. Another indigenous favorite game to the Manipuris is the Pasha. It is often played by six or four players like ludu. It is the part of their indigenous culture to play Pasha in different occasions, like marriage. Besides, football, cricket, volley ball, table tennis are some common games played by the Bangladeshi Manipuris.

#### **4.5 Cultural Aspects**

The Manipuris lead a well-disciplined life and they strictly maintain their distinctive culture and social system. Inter-dining and inter-marriage is absolutely forbidden according to their social customs. Even there is no usage of intermarriage between the Meitei and the Bishnupriyas. The Bangladeshi Manipuris are very hospitable in nature and peace-loving community. They keep a close relation with other people of the country and share each other’s social and cultural functions like birthday, marriage ceremony, Puja, Eid etc.

The Manipuris are mainly vegetarian. They usually eat rice, vegetables and fish as their staple food but not meat, egg, garlic and onion. Besides these, the traditional food items of Manipuris are ngari (sun dried non-salted fish), Hentak (fish products), Shingju, Utti (Alkali), Hawaijar (traditional fermented soyabean), Soiboom (bamboo shoot products) etc.(Singh,2010). Drug is absolutely forbidden by religious and social rules in Manipuri community.

But smoking ganja is precept in adoration of Shib as proshad. Mushroom is very popular food among Manipuris which is very delicious, nutritious and healthy. They like to take the leaves of Margosa tree<sup>20</sup> as food at least once in a month. Actually, the Margosa tree is used today as herbal medicine throughout the world. Lentil and fish items are not used strictly in adoration although they have to take it as their usual meal.

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<sup>19</sup> Rugby game like coconut

<sup>20</sup> Neem as herbal tree

In every yard of Manipuri houses, there is seen small garden of spices like Nunsihazak, Myangpa, and Nennam etc. The food processing art and food habit of Manipuris is based on the nature and some indigenous faiths that can help for better health. The Manipuri children learn the manner or art of taking meal from their family members as to sit on the ground without having any dining table from the very childhood. There is a scientific argument in favor of this art that creates pressure on stomach and helps anybody to take limited amount of food for physical and mental growth and development. It also helps to keep the Manipuri people very slim, even they remain very active at their old age.

The Manipuris rarely call on doctor as they enjoy a good health throughout their lives. In this regard, their traditional food habit is significantly supporting to ensure the sound health. In the context of Bangladesh, generally it is observed that the average life expectancy is higher among Manipuri people than that of other people of Bangladesh. They favour and used to have oil and fat free food which reveals the fundamental text of their lifestyle.

The Manipuri women, in general, wear three-piece clothes- “Phanek” (Lungi), “Blouse”, “Orna” and the male often wear “Gamcha” (long piece of towel weaved at home) round the loin(Singh,2005). Besides they commonly wear trousers, shorts, lungi and Shari apart from their customary dress. Dhuti, Punjabi and Shirt are used as the standard approach of male dress. The modern generations of Manipuri community are not interested in wearing ‘Gamcha’ and ‘Phanek’ round the breast rather they prefer wearing ‘Phanek’ round the loin. However, in the time being they wear shirt, pant, coat, saluar and kamiz in professional and outside activities.

The Manipuris are fond of songs and dances as they seem it as the key component of prayer. They love to patronize arts and literature and participate in the cultural activities in the country and even at the international functions. The Manipuri dance is contributing a lot to enrich the Bangladeshi culture. Manipuri dancers also take part in the Royal functions on invitation and inter-region dance competition throughout the country so that they can be incorporated in the cultural mainstream and hope for the best to perform their dances in international arena.

A good number of association had been formed and they still performing their best by appreciating and patronizing cultural aspects such as Bangladesh Manipuri Sahitya Sangsad (BMSS), Bangladesh Manipuri Sangskritik Parishad (BMSP), Bangladesh

Manipuri Sishu Sangstha (BMSS), Manipuri Samproday Kollayan Parishad (MSKP), Manipuri Muslim Kollayan Parishad (MMKP), Bangladesh Manipuri Mahila Samity (BMMS), Bangladesh Manipuri Juba Samity (BMJS), and Manipuri Satra Sangsad (MSS) (Haider, 2010).

Agriculture is the main occupation of Manipuris. It is their traditional livelihood and they get it on pedigree. As the Manipuris live in the plain land, the methods of agriculture are almost same to the mainstream people of Bangladesh. At present, they are introducing and applying a few scientific and modern technologies in the field of agriculture. Both male and female in this society are working hard actively in their farmlands to be self-reliant in family life. They cultivate their lands using axe, cattle, plough, yoke, ladder etc. They weed out of the farmland through scythe and use insecticide to kill the insects. Without ploughing, Manipuri women are involved in all stages of agriculture like sowing, harvesting, carrying the bundle of crops from the fields, withering-grinding and processing the crops.

Besides agriculture, Manipuri people are involved in different types of activities to afford the family cost. Day laboring, Rickshaw pulling, begging and maid servant to others home are quite obsolete in Manipuri society although they are involved as paid agro farmers of their rich neighbors and relatives and a few poor females work as paid hand loom workers at their neighbors' home who have no weaving machine of their own. Some Manipuris in urban areas are involved in jewellery manufacture, carpenting, automobile industries and workshops.

The jewelry manufactured is of fair workmanship, but not distinguished by any special merit: rings, bracelets, neckles are the articles chiefly made. The Manipuris are reputed both in home and abroad for their carpenting; imitating English work, turning in wood and ivory are the common first rate work. They can also make silver glass, electro-plate, good serviceable locks and can at a pinch repair and clean a clock.

The most attractive furniture in Manipuri house is the bed of the head of the family which is structured on a large burnished wood with four legs. They also keep an old wooden box with an iron lock for saving important documents and possessions. In some sophisticated houses, one may find chairs or stools of European design.

Manipuri handicrafts and weaving are generally rich in nature. As the Manipuris consist of three groups and there are differences of ethnicity and religion but they share some common features of costume. Their weaving is almost same though they apply various terms for their loom. Manipuri legend and folk traditions prove that weaving is an ancient craft in this community. Manipuri women weave it as home based activity in addition to their household and agricultural activities. Today, Manipuri women weave either for themselves or for the market. However, in the past they weaved some costumes not for themselves or for their family members, but to be presented these in the list of dowries of princesses. Just after the birth of a girl, the Manipuri mother traditionally starts weaving garments for her daughter which she will take with her as part of the dowry at the time of her marriage. To prevent these garments from being used by someone else, they are not sewn together until they are actually needed (Chakma and Zaman, 2010). Among the handicrafts and weaving garments inlaid with artistic work by Manipuri women are bed sheet, shal, towel, table cloth, curtain of windows and doors, gamcha, pillow cover, mafler, phida or innafi, phanek, handkerchief, three-piece, mosquito net, quilt and mattress case, bag etc.

It is notable that the 'Phida' (orna) is thicker and generally married or elderly women wear it; and 'Innafi' (orna) is finer which is worn by virgin girl or younger women. The Manipuri active women in all stages of society are involved in weaving; even the students and the service holder women never hesitate to pay close attention in this mechanical art.

Besides observing different religious devotion and periodic festivals, the Manipuri people celebrate some rites and rituals in time of birth, marriage and death. From the very beginning of the pregnancy of the Manipuri mother, the parents become very anxious and start praying to Gods and Goddesses for the safety and riskless delivery of the child. The pregnant women have to strictly maintain some rituals and restrictions like going outside home with undressed hair, going a long distance at night, crossing bridges or rivers.

After the birth of child, the 'Maiba' (wet-nurse) cut the umbilical cord of the child with the sharp edge of bamboo and the whole placenta of the child is buried under the ground at the southern side if the child is boy; and in the case of a girl child the placenta is buried at the back side of the home. At the sixth days of the birth, the child is sanctified through various rituals related to the birth which is called 'Ipanhaba'.

Then, the 'Maiba' offers religious worship in favour of five Gods - Fire, Water, Air, Earth and Sky to welcome the blessings of them for the good health and long life of the child. 'Maibi', another wet-nurse, perform some rituals taking the new-borns in her lap and then give them back to their mothers after completing different rituals. The father of the baby usually gives the holy symbolic name to the newly born baby. All the Manipuri children's ears are perforated just after the birth. Then on the fifth month for a girl child and on the sixth month for a male baby, food giving ceremony is held.

Manipuri community is divided into seven 'Yek' (salai). There is a strict restriction on the marriage between a girl and a youth belonging to the same yek (salai). Besides, there cannot be marriage among the close relatives and their social custom is still very strong in this regard. There are some stages of traditional Manipuri marriage.

After finishing informal talks between the two groups (bride and groom), some respectable persons on the part of the boy formally propose for marriage- it is called 'Mangon kaba'. Informal talk between the parents of boy and the girl reached to a final decision for the ritual of betrothment of a maiden which is called 'Waroiptot'. At this stage the bridegroom's party goes to the residence of the parents of the bride with some fruits, sweets and other things and primarily the date of marriage is fixed here. The next stage is "Heiching Poth Puba"- here seven kinds of fruits and huge amount of sweets are carried to the residence of the parents of the bride for their relatives, friends and neighbours. It is noted that in the item of seven fruits 'Heikru' (Amlaki) is a must. Then the fathers of bride and groom pray to the supreme ultimate ancestor with other seven ancestors for the prosperity and happiness of the couple.

In front of the bride-grooms procession, a boy carries a dish decorated with food for the devotion of Deity. The dish is called "Lipoth<sup>21</sup>". The lipoth carrier never sees the backside before completing the marriage ritual. Just behind him, some women will carry 'Fingaruk' (a basket made of bamboo full of sweets and cakes). The 'Fingaruk' bearer mothers are those who have already been birth their first child male as they are the symbols of good luck in Manipuri society. After completing the formalities of marriage according to their rituals and customs, the bride is taken to the groom's home.

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<sup>21</sup> A dish decorated with colorful cloths and papers full of sweets carried by a boy to the bride's home



In the fifth day of marriage, the bride visits her parents' residence along with the groom and his relatives. To celebrate this occasion, a banquet is arranged in the residence of bride's parents- it is called "Manganichaba".

Since the very early stage of Manipuri community, there had been observed a number of rituals connected to the death- the last stage of life of an individual. "Maiba" (the local physician) gives treatment to the ailing people and acts as the 'Tantrik' in Manipuri community. He determines the tentative time and date of death of the ailing people through testing the pulse. The patient near to die is kept on a large banana leaf to a fixed place. 'Maiba' remains in close contact to the patient till death.

After death, the dead body is kept to the north extremity of the earth's axis in the yard and gives bath following the opposite rituals of a living being. Then four persons carry the "kay" (Khatia) of dead body to the cemetery. The funeral pyre is arranged in seven strata as on the symbol of seven 'Yek' (Salai) of Manipuri community. In the case of under-age, the dead body is buried into grave. Obsequies ceremonies are very painful, but strictly maintained for the benefit of the dead relative in Manipuri society. It is noted that the obsequies ceremony is somehow relaxed in under- age death rather than the older people.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN BANGLADESH**

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0 Gender Discrimination in Bangladesh**

Human differentiation on the basis of gender is a crucial phenomenon that impacts every aspect of our daily lives. Actually women in Bangladesh are the most disadvantaged, oppressed and poorest group in the world. The majority of women in Bangladesh experiences bitterly from both poverty and patriarchy. With the advent of globalization, gender equality and empowerment have become universal demand throughout the globe. But, in Bangladesh, like other developing countries, the efforts of reforming the existing socio-cultural structures which are considered as the prime factor for different types of discrimination between male and female are completely failed due to rigid and complex male's attitude and unfavorable environment. Socio-psychological factors are also claimed as barriers in the path of achieving equality in all aspects of life. Due to lack of awareness, most of the women in our society try to be happy in the family accepting everything in their lives as fate accompli. Many of them rarely support the reform activities or even make them distance or reserve from these initiatives. They not only own the traditions of bearing all types of agony by themselves, but also teach this custom to their girl children and establish them in their lives properly. Gender discrimination has been practiced since the origin of human being in respect of socio-cultural practices and religious ground that constrains women in all facets of life.

Gender refers to the personal sexual identity of an individual, regardless of the person's biological and outward sex. Gender is the socio-cultural and psychological aspects of maleness and femaleness. According to Ann Oakley, "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women in 'masculine' and 'feminine'-gender has no biological origin, that the connections between sex and gender are not really 'natural' at all." According to Human Development Report in South Asia, 2000, The Gender Question, " 'Sex' represents the biological differences between females and males. 'Gender' represents the socially-constructed differences between women and men, girls and boys, in a given society".

According to Harriet Bradley, "Gender refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organization and reproduction, the sexual division of labor and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity".

**CEDAW** Defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” In many times our assumption regarding sex and gender is ambiguous. So, to specify the idea about sex and gender, Bhasin (2003) identified some distinguished features of them:

Sex	Gender
1. Sex is natural.	1. Gender is socio-cultural and it is man-made.
2. Sex is biological. It refers to visible difference in genitalia and related differences in procreative function.	2. Gender is socio-cultural and it refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behavior patterns, roles and responsibilities, etc.
3. Sex is constant, it remains the same everywhere.	3. Gender is variable, it changes from time to time, culture to culture, even family to family.
4. Sex cannot be changed.	4. Gender can be changed.
5. Sex is called ‘praakritik linga’ (natural/biological sex).	5. Gender is called ‘saamaagik’ linga’ (social sex).

**Table 2:** Difference between Sex and Gender

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and distinguishing between masculinity and femininity. Sexologist John Money first introduced the terminological difference between sex and gender in 1955. Before his work, the use of the word ‘gender’ was uncommon in applied field but grammatical categories. Money’s meaning of the word became popular throughout the world after 1970s, when feminist theory welcomed the differences between biological sex and social construction of gender.

At present, the distinction is strictly followed in social sciences and also by the World Health Organization (WHO). Often in many cases, gender includes sex or even replaces it.

However, sex is the biological categories of man and woman while gender is a person's self-representation as man or woman, or how that person is responded to by social institutions on the basis of one's gender presentation. Hence, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, activities, behaviors and attributes that given society considers appropriate for men and women.

### **5.1 Gender Discrimination**

Gender is a fundamental and central organizing principle of modern life. In every culture and cultural production, and in human societies, gender difference is a pivotal way in which people identify themselves as persons, organize social relations, and symbolize meaningful natural and social events and processes. The concept 'Gender' itself is the source of discrimination. Gender discrimination occurs when sexes are treated unequally. Gender discrimination is not based solely on gender differences, but on how people are treated differently because of their sex. Gender discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person on the basis of gender which affects both men and women. The long history of inequality among the sexes is the basis for gender discrimination and the foundation for efforts to decrease inequality among sexes. It is apparent in work situations where one gender is given preferential treatment or one gender receives less pay or job responsibilities because of gender bias and unfair stereotypes. Gender discrimination also exists in sports, educational institutions and political organizations. Historically, women are under-represented in the work place, education, games and politics. The residual effects of favoritism towards men and unfair treatment of women is the primary cause of gender discrimination (Scott, 2015). The systematic, unfavorable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies their rights, opportunities of resources is called gender discrimination. Across the world, women are treated unequally and less value is placed on their lives because of gender; women's differential access to power and control of resources is central to the discrimination in all institutional spheres (Mahtab, 2012)

### **5.2 History of Gender Discrimination against Women: Past and Present**

The history of equality between male and female has been reached to this point after crossing a long bumpy road, with many obstacles and turns throughout its course. A remarkable number of changes has been taken place in this regard just before fifty years from now; and this revolution leads men and women conscious about the discrimination against women which is prevailing in the world from our collective past.

It is claimed that in many Western Countries women hold an almost same facilities even footing with men in their countries. But the reality is quite different from the theory. Women work in public offices, perform advanced surgical procedures and run corporations just as the men, but in each sector women often earn less, face a numerical obstacles by their male counterparts; and they would never be confronted with them as having much smaller numbers than men. This statistics is not on the basis of total number of populations of the world, this is only the ratio based on existing inequality. Actually, it is a long-term established culture of discrimination against women that has identified polar and created the binary between male and female.

In developing nations, the picture of discrimination is rather worse where young girls are account for more than sixty percent of the out of school children. The underlying reason behind this scenery is over emphasize of the developing country's parents on the welfare of their sons. The unchanged history of developing countries is still remained regarding to discrimination, in which the young man is considered as an asset of the family; where the young woman is considered as a supporter. They stay home and help with household tasks while men go out for income and develop their education. In the case of marriage, girl's consent is not needed and they are bought and sold as young brides in our society. They are only the shareholders of the rightful property of their father or husband less than the share percent of male members.

Amy S. Wharton (2005) has identified three broad frameworks for understanding gender that correspond generally to where the "sociological action" is with respect to the social practices that produce gender: individualist approach, interactional approach, and institutional approach. All these three approaches have a long history of research and development. Individualist views of gender include a wide variety of sociological and psychological perspectives.

Though different theorists of individualist approach differ from each other in some important aspects, but every one of them hold the shared view that gender is an attribute or traits, characteristics, and identities of people, and that gender operates primarily through these personal characteristics of individuals. The main focus of this approach is primarily on individuals, rather than on social situations or institutions. The fundamental and implicit belief of this perspective is that average differences between males and females as groups are greater than the differences within each sex category.

But it does not claim that all women are the same or all men are the same. It means sex puts limits or constraints on gender. The constraints imposed by sex come basically from the distinguished reproductive roles of females and males. It assumes that there are some differences between both sexes (men and women) which are relatively stable across situations. It sees the differences between females as a group and males as a group as greater as and larger than the differences within each group. Hence the researchers of this approach pay less attention to differences among women and among men in the ground of race, ethnicity, sex, and social class and so on.

It believes that the most powerful organizers of human capabilities and behavior are sex distinctions. People's personal characteristics like traits, behaviors, identities etc. are shaped and determined by sex category. People are gendered and thus the differences between masculine and feminine are expressed in individuals. Sex is a source of gender which puts limits on the traits, behaviors, and identities of people. There are two types of perspectives falling within individualist approaches: the first perspective is one that views gender as a set of individual traits, abilities, or behavioral dispositions and attempts to understand how women and men differ in those areas; the second set of approaches explores how women and men become gendered, focusing on the social (or, for some, biosocial) processes that produce gender (Wharton, 2005). The individualist perspective examines various broad kinds of human characteristics. In this perspective, the main emphasis is placed on identifying and comparing differences between men and women. The major theories of individualist perspective are sex difference research, bio-social and evolutionary psychology perspectives, and theory and research on gender socialization.

Gender is a system of social practices that constitutes people as different and that organizes relation of inequality (Wharton, 2005). Interactionist approaches to gender emphasize more on the social context within which individuals interact rather than on individuals. It pays greater attention on forces operating outside the individual.

It argues that people's reactions and behaviors vary in accordance with the social context. It focuses on the social relations which produce gender differences and inequalities. The major theories of interactionist views are ethno-methodology (doing gender), status characteristics theory, and theory and research on homophily. The theorists of interactionist perspectives differ in many important aspects, but all of them hold the view that the process of social categorization, particularly sex categorization is

central theme and essential to social interaction. Social categorization is the processes through which people classify others and themselves as members of particular groups. All the three perspectives of interactionist approaches focus on the paths that gender emerges and is reproduced in social interaction.

In this way, they differ from individualist views, which argue gender as residing primarily within individuals. Interactionist perspectives are also useful and essential to individualist understandings of gender. Individualists view gender as a relatively stable property of people, on the other hand interactionist approaches focus on the paths that social context and social interaction influence the expression and significance of gender.

Institutional perspectives view gender as aspects of social structure and culture. It pays attention to the practices and policies of organizations, and also to the material and symbolic dimensions of large-scale social institutions, i.e. family, work, education etc. Organization is a social unit established to achieve a particular goal. Organizations have boundaries, rules, procedures, and means of communication (Hall, 2002). In simplest terms, an institution is an organized, established pattern or even more simply, “the rules of the game” (Jepperson, 1991:143). Institutions, then, are those features of social life that seem so regular, so ongoing, and so permanent that they are often accepted as just “the way things are” (Wharton, 2005). Institution may include several different types of organizations. For example, education is a social institution including different types of schools, teachers, students, guardians, administrative offices etc. Acker (1992) defines an institution is gendered means that “gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distribution of power in the various sectors of social life. Taken as more or less functioning wholes, the institutional structures of the United States and other societies are organized along the lines of gender... (These institutions) have been historically developed by men, currently dominated by men and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically.”

From this perspective, though aspects of social life are conventionally treated as “genderless” or “gender-neutral”, actually these are the largest expressions of gender. This way of thinking about gender directs attention to the organization, structure, and practices of social institutions, and it emphasizes the ways that these entrenched, powerful, and relatively taken-for-granted aspects of the social order produce and reproduce gender distinctions and inequality (Wharton, 2005).



Hence, institutions are an important and great source of gender beliefs which tend to be self-perpetuating and also play a central role in the maintenance and perpetuation of gender distinctions and inequalities. However, no one of these three approaches of gender is sufficient enough to understand gender fully and accurately. All these three approaches are combinedly needed to understand gender fully. Actually, gender is a multistage system, operating at the individual, interactional and institutional levels. As a multilayered system, gender affects people's identities and characteristics, patterns of social interaction, and social institutions. So, the gender system shapes social life in crucial ways. In fact, gender is a multilayered system of practices and relations that operates at all levels of the social world (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Risman 1998).

### **5.3 Causes of Gender Discrimination**

The status of women in Bangladesh is very low and they are in a vulnerable position. Women in Bangladesh are perceived to be degraded to the position of second-class citizens because of their economic, social, political and legal bondages in relation to gender (Oakley, 1985). In Bangladesh, discrimination against women starts at birth or even before birth; millions of Bangladeshi women are simply missing and never born for female feticide. A large number of Bangladeshi women die every year due to lack of proper treatment, medical care, and malnutrition. Women in Bangladesh are the poorest of the poor and disadvantaged section of the society. Women in Bangladesh are severely discriminated and violated in every walk and every sphere of life. Gender discrimination has been rooted in unequal distribution of power that adversely affected our women in every footing of life. The causes of the discrimination against women are in details:

#### **5.3.1 The Historical Facts**

Historical evidence provides us the base of gender discrimination. In the very beginning of human civilization, gender division of labor had been clearly defined.

As hunting was the main way to survive on earth, men were involved in hunting and women were considered as gatherers. Naturally, men gained prestigious position and power based on the control of the distribution of valued goods in family or society. Men hold that position because of their physical strength. For that, men participated in wars occurring among several clans. They also communicated with other tribes, operated business and took risk of lives in the field of battle.

When they came back as winner in the battle field with a large number of captured slaves and animals to feed the people of their clan, the women and waiting people welcomed them and devoted themselves in nursing the winners. The job of hunting was more prestigious rather than gathering food and water for the tribes as hunting required more physical strength and taking the risk of life. The productive resources were only in the domain of settled agriculture. The land property inherited from individual families and accumulation took places in the form of land headed by the male. On the other hand, women were engaged in bearing and rearing of children and in household activities. In most time, women had to stay at home for performing their productive and reproductive roles and men would remain busy with outside work. In this way, women become the second class citizen subject to men's decision from very early period of human civilization.

### **5.3.2 The Structure of Society**

Most of our society and societal structure are patriarchal in nature, but Garo as an ethnic minority group is matri-local or matrilineal in nature, not matriarchal. Patriarchy refers to male domination and control over women in every sphere of life. In patriarchal society, women are considered as the subordination of men and they have to perform their duties according to the demand or satisfaction of the male. In a word, they are discriminated, neglected and oppressed inside and outside the home.

According to Bhasin (1993), the following areas of women's lives can be said to be under patriarchal control:

#### **5.3.2.a Women's Productive or Labour Power**

Men keep the controlling power on women's productivity both in home and outside, in paid work. In domestic sphere, women provide free services at all for their children, husbands and other members of the family till their death. It is generally called 'patriarchal mode of production'. Women's back-breaking and repetitive-endless hard labour is never considered in the family; and they are to be dependent on their male partners.

Here women are the producing class while their male partners are the expropriating class. Women's labour is controlled by the men in several ways outside the home. The joining and the continuation of women's paid work depend on the will of men. They may force their women to sell their labour or they may prevent them from going to work outside the home.

Thus, men's control and exploitation of women's labour implies that men get materialistic benefit from patriarchal structure of society; they take advantage of concrete financial gains from the inferior position of the women.

### **5.3.2.b Women's Reproduction**

Although women are performing reproductive role in our society, still they do not have the right to decide regarding the number of children, the time of birth, using contraception etc. Besides male domination individually, male dominated institutions also regulate women's reproductive capacity through imposing rules. The continuous revolution and struggle by women for the freedom of choice regarding the reproductive role in every country of the world is an indication of proving the strength of these control mechanisms and how conservative the men are to reform or relinquish these rules. In modern world, rapid growth of population is the matter of concern for government, policy makers and civil society. So, these agencies are taking various initiatives to maintain ecological balance and sustainable environment.

However, most of the patriarchal states attempt to take the controlling power of women's reproductive role through its family planning programmes. Several states decide the optimum size of the country's population according to the demand, and actively encourage or discourage women to take children. For example, in Bangladesh, the government takes several policies to control and reduce the massive growth of population considering it as one of the most notable problems of development. In this connection, the government, NGOs and international donors are operating collaborative programmes in our country like awareness-building, reward for the small family, providing family planning materials free of cost, etc. On the other hand, Malaysian government inspires women to have several children in order to ensure a sizeable domestic market for the country's industrial product. The radical feminists indicate the ideology of motherhood as the central point of their analysis for women's current situation. Because women are subjugated mainly because of the burden of mothering and they are forced to nurture to their children by patriarchal societies.

### **5.3.2.c Control over Women's Sexuality**

Women are bound or obliged to satisfy the sexual demands of men according to their needs and desires. Here women's opinion is totally overlooked. It is another very important area of women's subordination.

In our society, women's sexual expression is very restricted outside marriage; whereas men's promiscuity in this regard is neglected. Sometimes, men may force women into prostitution or trading their sexuality. In patriarchal society, men rape and sometimes provide threat of rape which is considered as an invocation or domination of women's sexuality. Women's sexuality is controlled and monitored through family, society, culture and religions observing their dress, attitudes and movement. In a patriarchal society, women are treated not only as mothers but also as sexual slaves. The male dominated culture seems women as sexual objects for the pleasure of male having a rare exception. According to radical feminist, rape may not have existed in every society, but it is an established approach of patriarchy. It considers rape as a function of political oppression exercised by the powerful class on a powerless class. There are some propositions of patriarchy to control over women's sexuality like institutionalized prostitution, pornography and forced heterosexuality.

#### **5.3.2.d Women's Mobility**

Access to mobility in every sphere is the precondition for building awareness. Taken this concept into account, men control women's mobility to dominate on women's sexuality, production and reproduction. There are some artificial restrictions to control women's mobility and freedom of lives such as the imposition of 'hizab', restrictions on leaving domestic place, separation of public and private domain, limits on interaction between male and female etc. But male is not subjected to the same restrictions because of their dominating role and power in the society.

#### **5.3.2.e Property and other Economic Resources**

In our society, men control property and other resources related to production and they hand over these resources to their sons according to the lineage of patriarchy. Although women achieve the legal rights to inherit such property, they cannot acquire the actual control over it due to existing customary practices, emotional blackmail, plain violence and other social grounds.

Personal Laws act as one of the irony instrument to neglect women's right of property and to make women as the disadvantaged section of the society. According to UN statistics, "Women do more than 60 percent of the hours of work done in the world, but they get 10 percent of the world's income and own one percent of the world's property."

The main institutions in our society are patriarchal in nature. According to Bhasin (1993), the family, religion, media and the law are the pillars of a patriarchal system and structure. This well-knit and deep-rooted system makes patriarchy seem invincible and natural. Bhasin (1993) identified the following patriarchal institutions in our society:

### **5.3.3 The Family**

Family, the basic unit of society, is patriarchal in nature. Everyone in society holds the package of patriarchal propositions started from the family. In most cases, men control women's sexuality, labour, reproduction and mobility within the family as the head of the household. In hierarchical family structure, men perform as superior and hold top position whereas woman is inferior and subordinate. The rooted patriarchal values from the family disseminate to the next generation. The family is considered as the institution where one can first receive the lessons of subordination, discrimination, hierarchy and inferiority. Thus, in the family, boys learn to assert and dominate; whereas girls learn to submit, to expect and habituate with unequal treatment performed by the family and society. The nature and scope of male control may differ from family to family, but it does not mean that male domination is absent. For example, from very childhood we make boys habituated not to be emotional and not to cry to keep pace with the patriarchal social structure. On the other hand, girl child is allowed to express her emotion but not show anger; because anger is suitable only for a boy and as a patriarchal manner it is the quality of boy, not girl. Thus, family is an important institution for creating hierarchical system and keeping order in society.

### **5.3.4 Religion**

In most religions, men are given supreme position in society. The religious practices present a patriarchal order and always work against women. In no society, men and women experience religion in the similar way. Religions are the powerful factor of social institutions shaping the gender differentiation in societies.

All major religions have created, interpreted and controlled by upper class men; they have the authority to define morality, ethics, behavior, and even law; they have identified the duties and rights of men and women and the relationship between them. Even a person's legal identity in respect of marriage, divorce and inheritance is determined by his or her religion. There are a number of examples on how almost every religion considers women to be inferior and how religious rules often justify the use of violence against women.

There are some restricted places where women are not allowed to enter but men. Similarly, there are some defined norms through which only men can perform certain duties i.e. 'Purohit', 'Tagore'; there is no obligation for men pertaining to these religious activities.

### **5.3.5 The Legal System**

In most countries, especially in Asia and Third World countries, women do not enjoy complete legal equality with men, despite constitutional guarantees to all. The legal system favors men and economically powerful classes. Most of the women of South Asian region face discrimination in the case of property, security, decision-making and legal system itself regardless of class, caste, or religion. The codification of women's fundamental rights in the constitution and the legal system can enhance the options of women confronted with abuse or neglect, through the establishment of systems of legal recourse. In Pakistan once the legal framework is more just and supportive; it will be easier to dismantle the grossly exploitative social customs and traditions rampant in society (Azhar, 1995).

Hence, the demand for women's legal equality has become central to the growing demand for women's empowerment. But the attitude of the judiciary towards women is only reflected in a few family law cases which is not a general trend. It is happened due to the socio-economic transformation of Bangladeshi society. The legal system regarding equality will need to be taken of some social changes as women's contribution to the national economy is no less greater than male. In South Asia, every legal system favors man as the head of the family, the ultimate guardian of the children and the possessor, as well as the inheritor of the property. Due to lack of women's position in administration and legislature, the system of judiciary, judges and lawyers are in most cases patriarchal in nature and their interpretation of the law also promotes male dominance.

### **5.3.6 The Economic System and Economic Institutions**

In patriarchal society, economic institutions and systems are controlled by men. They own most property, direct economic activity, determine and distribute the value of different productive activities. In the era of globalization, women are considered as half of the contributors to the national and global development.

Different statistics prove that women do more than 80 percent of productive activities including cooking foods, rearing and bearing of children, agricultural production and other socio-economic activities. But invisibility of women in economy is a worldwide phenomenon. Most of their productive works are neither recognized nor valued which we may call *shadow work* is completely discounted and household activities are never paid and not considered as economic contribution to the national development.

No development is possible without equal participation of women in every sphere of life. But the economic systems and institutions prohibited women to access resource mobilization, own property, and decision-making process in economic grounds. It also makes women's contribution in the economic sector invisible and unrecognized because of the practice of patriarchal economic systems.

### **5.3.7 Political Systems and Institutions**

In every country of South Asia, political institutions and political systems from local level to the national level are male-dominated. Even women's participation or involvement in political parties is not satisfactory at all although South Asia's women leaders are the epitome of powerful women reaching the top position of government. But overall statistics tell a different story. The majority of women in South Asian region is illiterate, in poor health, invisible in the national accounts and suffers legal, social, political and economic discrimination in every step of life. Women in South Asia have the lowest rate of participation in the governance structure. The discrepancy between the form and reality in the case of Bangladesh is clear to all. In our country, the heads of the two major political parties are women, but their inner-circles are almost men and they are always dominating in every policy and decision-making process. In Bangladesh patriarchal social structure, customs, norms, values and male attitudes restrict women's participation in politics.

In spite of having constitutional guarantees for certain rights of women as stated in the article 27, 28 (1), 28 (2), 28 (3), 28 (4) and 29 (1), they are not getting equal political rights with men. Women voters in Bangladesh constitute about 50% of the eligible voters. Although women are illiterate and disadvantaged section of the society having lack of basic knowledge of politics, their participation in the local and national election have been impressive (Siddiqui and Hossain, 2002). It is encouraging that women are coming to the polling booths in increasing numbers to cast their votes (Islam, 2003).

During early 1990s, women started to defy 'Fatwas' which were against NGOs activities and exercising their voting rights and stated that participating in voting was a sinful act on the part of women. However, increased turnout of women in voting centers does not mean their absolute freedom to choose the candidates they would vote for. Because, in most cases this decision is influenced by their husbands, fathers, brothers or some other influential male members of the family as well as the society. Actually, in Bangladesh the use of female voters is a means for male politicians to get elected (Mahtab, 2012). In Cabinet, Parliament and Local Government, women hold poor number and less influential post; so their participation in decision making process is also low.

### **5.3.8 Media**

Media are very important tools in the hands of powerful or elite class or upper class men to propagate class and gender ideology. All types of media (both print and electronic) portray the negative image of women and do everything to make women subordinate in all walks of life. The media system and the controlling power of censorship are in the hands of the males. In films, radio, television, and newspapers women are presented as stereotype role performers and their activities as well as approaches are distorted. Usually, media represents and repeats the theme of male superiority and female inferiority constantly. The media is totally controlled by men. So the news regarding their success, progress and prosperity, and female's failure and inferiority are published regularly in the newspapers. We hardly read any news about the positive image of women activities. To the detriment of women's image, the media publish and present the news of violence against women with clear picture of the victims, but overlook the criminal subject matters.

In modern age, the discriminatory aspects, biasness, sexual abuse, marital rape, incest, eve-teasing etc. are often encouraged by media. Actually, media is very sexist today which often represents women as a commodity for consumption.

### **5.3.9 Educational Institutions and Knowledge Systems**

Educational indicators of South Asian women, although recording improvement in recent years, are some of the worst in the world, especially at technical and higher levels. Despite some improvements, South Asia continues to lag far behind the developing world in providing equal educational opportunities for women.



Education is the key to breaking the vicious circle of ignorance and exploitation and empowering women and girls to improve their lives. But with the institutionalization of education, men have captured the control over the whole areas of philosophy, law, literature, the arts and science. In our society, discriminatory ideas regarding the subject choice between boys and girls have been strongly established to make female inferior in the area of specialized knowledge and experience. Girls are always discouraged to study science subjects such as biology, physics, chemistry, botany, engineering and pharmacy which are considered appropriate domain of boys. Male dominated knowledge and education created and perpetuated patriarchal ideology which created a variety of gender differentiated forms of subjectivity (Walby, 1990).

#### **5.4 Types of Gender Discrimination**

Gender discrimination in south Asian countries is a buzzword now. This concept has been rooted in the structure and functions of our family, society and state. Someone opines that discrimination stated and hurt us hardly, but it is impossible to remove gender discrimination completely. Although women are suffering from severe discrimination in their very childhood or even before birth, our society does not take any constructive initiative but showing an ostentatious reaction. Experiencing from different approaches in patriarchal society, gender discrimination may be of various types. These are as follows:

##### **5.4.1 Social Discrimination**

Family is the basic organization of society and gender discrimination starts from family. Due to male domination, discrimination or violence against women begins prior to birth. Women are often assaulted physically during the very risky time of pregnancy, and even marital rape or forced abortion is the common picture in our society.

Since very early period, female infanticide has been a heartrending matter though it has been decreased due to technological development in the domain of medical science. But unfortunately, female feticide rate in South Asian developing countries has been increased as human being has the capacity to know about the sexual identity of the baby before birth through ultrasonography. Son preferences are assented to the family and society. After the birth of a boy baby, he is welcomed to the earth by giving Azan, distribution of sweet among the neighbors and relatives, and even arrangement of a joyful program gathering a huge number of populations with feast as the expression of

happiness. In addition to that one cow or two goats are sacrificed in the naming ceremony of a son which is called “Akika”. But in the case of a girl baby only religious revelation is whispered in her ears and one goat is sacrificed in “Akika”. Mothers also explicit their strong preference for sons, because they realize their low status within the family and their future security in the society. If they become widows or divorcee women, then they will depend upon their sons. Otherwise, their miserable situation knows no bounds. Often girls are bound to get early marriage with old rich men because of poverty. When their aged husbands die, their property can do nothing for the little “widows”, but bitter pinching of their widowhood for the remaining part of their life.

So, many girls in Bangladesh are forcedly get marriage by their poor parents at early age and also become mother at under age. They are also pressured to give birth of sons rather than daughters by their husbands and in-law families. If she fails to give birth of a son, her husband often gets married again in many cases without her permission. He gets married again in the excuse of maintaining his heredity. Moreover, in order to produce son, women continue to give birth baby one after another and they become sufferer of many diseases, and even die. Actually, women and girls face discrimination in access to health and thus every year a large number of women and girls become death for lack of proper treatment.

In South Asian nations, maternal mortality rate is very high comparing to the rest of the parts of the world. Most of the women in developing countries are suffering from malnutrition and ill health for unequal treatment towards them. From very childhood, parents and family members take special care of boy thinking that he will have to obtain power to run the family further.

But they neglect the health and food issues of girl child considering bad investment in unprofitable sector. The social tradition, norms and values also keep women aside from the mainstream of social development. Girl child is taught to be introvert and to express their feelings in silence and secret whereas the boys are encouraged to be aggressive and extrovert in nature. In most families in Bangladesh still now women take their meals after feeding the male members of their families and most often they eat less food than they need according to the metabolism. Girl child only can share her feelings with sisters and mothers, but boys can share everything with all the members of the family and society.

The trend of women's position in society is changing day by day due to their access in education. But the reality is that most of the girl children drop out from primary and secondary education levels as they get married unwillingly and to be influenced by the parents. Because in our society women are exploited by the "supply-demand" concept of goods imposed by the tyrannical thumb of society. Hence parents consider girl child as burden after passing secondary or higher secondary level, fearing adverse reflection of the society. On the other hand, the males lose their interest to get marriage the established self-reliant elder women. Parents also show discriminatory treatment towards girl in the spheres of access to movement and higher education. Girls are not permitted to move freely according to their needs. They have restrictions to enter home before sunset whereas boys are free to move and time is not a major factor to reach the home. So, our social bindings are mostly responsible for making women dependent upon men which usually broaden the path of discrimination against women.

In an emergency case if a girl stays outside home after evening, family members become anxious and worried about her safety, but parents wait with prepared food for a boy if he does not come back in time. In most cases, parents consider making their girl child educated as a loss project. They do not permit their girl child to go far from home for the purpose of education and influence them to take the easy subjects without science and maths. Eve-teasing is another type of physical and mental harassment of girls. It is one of the burning issues of the day in Bangladesh. It is a very complex social problem which has become so alarming that at present no girl is spared from being a victim of eve-teasing in one form or another.

With the beginning of free market economy, when the girls and women started going out for education and employment at large scale, eve-teasing with its sharp jaws has spread throughout the country. At present, the most serious concern for Bangladeshi girl is the harassment in public sphere. Young girls, especially school and college girls and female garment workers are the top of the list as victims of eve-teasing. The victims of eve-teasing may be physically harassed or mentally upset. Sometimes the teenager victims can neither tolerate the humiliation and control their emotions as themselves nor share to any other members of the family. Then they commit suicide. Eve-teasing also encourages early marriage (Siddiky, Ara & Khatun, 2015). Moreover, rape and incest are the two cruel features towards women in society.

In ethnic minority communities, this type of discrimination is most common. In this case, women have to face multi-dimensional agony and torture. If they express it to the family members, they compel the victims to be silent in the fear of social prestige and mockery. In the name of justice they have to be harassed in different forms. Often, the victims are to be blamed and punished by our society instead of the criminals. Hence society is the cradle of all kinds of discrimination against women.

#### **5.4.2 Economic Discrimination**

In South Asian region among all other discriminations, economic discrimination perpetuates their low status in all aspects of life. Women's reproductive and productive activities including bearing and rearing of children, nurturing, household maintenance are so essential in both social and national perspective. In most cases, women are involved in the informal sector where their contribution gets marginal status and recognition. Besides, a large wage differentiation between men and women is a common feature in both rural and urban sector although they are performing similar work with their male colleagues. They are also involved in agriculture and other informal sectors to cope with the challenges of globalization but no real picture of women's contribution is published or account in the national economic statistics. Gender division of labor is another cruelest fact that bounds women to perform stereotypes roles.

Our prevailing cultural norms ascribe low status to women doing manual work outside the home. For this, they are forced to be marginalized in unpaid and unrecognized works. Indeed, some sectors have been defined for women by our patriarchal social system. For instance, women are encouraged for education and health sector where they persist of very simple and routine works considering that women have no ability to hold superior position of making effective decision. Moreover, technology and technical sectors are to be considered as male domain. Although women are getting some opportunities to join the work outside the home with the permission of the male members of their family, they are facing adverse situation in the work place. Sometimes they are harassed physically and mentally by their male colleagues and bosses.

Public transport for the women employees is another dreadful experience where the helpers, conductors and ill-motive passengers try to harass them physically with pinching, pucking and illegal touching.

In addition to that advertisement for recruiting personnel in different sectors is published in such a way where women are not eligible to apply for holding the post. Forced prostitution and trafficking in women and children are also increasing at an alarming rate in our country. In the press and media, women are presented nakedly as goods for the advertisement of different commodities. Newspapers and electronic media often publish the news of violence against women with colorful picture of the victims avoiding the history of the criminals.

Now-a-days some deceivers taking the opportunity of women's simple credence and forcefully recording the pornography, they spread it to the public through electronic media which provokes women to commit suicide. Furthermore, our radio, television and media telecast various programs, movies and serials containing the concept of "Laksmi" and the traditional features and roles of Bengali women as "Pativrata<sup>22</sup>", "Patiprana<sup>23</sup>" etc. that inspires and perpetuates discrimination against women in the society.

#### **5.4.3 Political and Administrative Discrimination**

The constitution of the Peoples' of the Republic of Bangladesh has guaranteed equal rights of men and women in every strata of life. But in third world countries, there are some socio-economic, political and institutional factors which ought to be considered as women's less representation in politics and administration.

Socio-cultural factors prohibit women to participate in politics and decision-making. Among social and cultural factors deep rooted patriarchal traditions, norms and attitudes, poverty, lack of access to resources, low salaries, discrimination in the work place, lack of access to political party lists are noted as root causes for women's under representation in politics and administrative decision-making as well (Mahtab,2012). Women hold the responsibility for household and family maintenance.

In both urban and rural areas women of poor families are involved in income generating activities and food supplies with agricultural labor or informal employment. Our society and family thus deprive them from political participation. In the era of globalization, the women of Western countries are very fast in the realm of political participation and decision-making.

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<sup>22</sup> Sacrifice women's lives for their husbands welfare

<sup>23</sup> Beloved wife of the husband

However, in South Asian region, the family and society impose restrictions only for women's participation in the political arena. The formal political system must cover the electoral, legislative and party process, whereas the informal political process includes a review of women's organizations whose aim is to raise women's status, create awareness of women's issues, and build platforms for which women's demands can be made. In seeking to find a public voice with which to demand change, these ostensibly non-political organizations do in fact venture into realm of politics (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994).

A major portion of women in Bangladesh is poor, illiterate, and unconscious accompanying with malnutrition and ill health. Although they constitute more than half of the total population of the country, their ratio in political position is very low. They are used as the ladders of holding males position in politics which would be clear if we review their participation in casting votes in the previous elections of Bangladesh.

Moreover, the structure of political institutions is itself a barrier for women's political involvement. Most of the South Asian countries are headed by women, but in contrary to the fact, the inner circle for decision making in the state policy is comprised and ultimately influenced by males.

The discrimination or inequality in politics between men and women would be clear through the following figure:

Government	Total number of Minister	Total number of Man Minister	Total number of Woman Minister	% of Woman Minister
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972-1975)	50	47	2	4
Ziaur Rahman (1979-1982)	101	95	6	6
Hossain M.Ershad (1982-1990)	133	127	4	3
Begum Khaleda Zia (1991-1996)	39	36	3	5
Sheikh Hasina (1996-2001)	46	42	4	8.69
Begum Khaleda Zia (2001-2006)	60	58	2	3.5
Sheikh Hasina (2009-2014)	46	39	6	3.5
Sheikh Hasina (2014- )	50	45	5	10

**Table 3:** Number of women Ministers in Bangladesh during different Regimes.

**Source:** [www.kabirhat.com.ministers.html](http://www.kabirhat.com.ministers.html)

The patriarchal social structure makes women dependent on male's decision in any activities. Even they cast their votes influenced by the will of the head of the family or husband. Our political system is also dominated by male and the political parties are somehow reluctant to give nomination to women in national and local level election. In order to overcome this situation, the national parliament passed the provision of reserved seats for women at both local and national level. In the reserved seats at national level, women are nominated by the political parties, but not directly elected.

Administration refers to management and governance of activities properly to achieve the desire end. Women in Bangladesh are deprived of higher administration and it starts from family. They are performing both employees and management level works comparatively in a more effective way than male. But the decision making power remains in the hand of male members. Thus, their participation in political leadership and the administrative hierarchy is infrequent. So they have minimal impact in the planning, management, decision making and implementation of policies of Bangladesh.

Besides, our society prevents and discourages women from applying for the administration, foreign affairs, and police cadres of Bangladesh Civil Service thinking that women are less capable both physically and mentally for these challenging jobs. We only prefer education and health cadres for our women. With a view to clarifying the discrimination against women, we can trace a summary of 29 cadre services. From very beginning women have been regularly appearing at the Bangladesh Civil Service Examination and getting recruitment to the posts according to their capacity. However, women's position compared to men in terms of number is very poor.

The number of women holding class I position in Ministries Divisions, Departments/ Directorates and autonomous bodies is only 5,066 compared to 73,619 men. It means that only 6.44% women are occupying class I positions compared to 93.56% men (Mahtab, 2012) in spite of having 10% quota reservation for women as a positive discrimination. Women's representation at the higher levels of the Civil Service or in the Secretariat is not satisfactory.

It is show in the following figure:

Position	Male	Female	Total Officer
Secretary	50	2	52
Additional Secretary	159	12	171
Joint Secretary	395	34	429
Deputy Secretary	1248	170	1418
Senior Assistant Secretary	1221	271	1492
Assistant Secretary	695	246	941
Total	3768	735	4503

**Table 4:** Women's Representation in Administration  
Source: Ministry of Public Administration 2010.

In District and Upazila level, women's representation as Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) is very low and insignificant.



#### **5.4.4 Legal Discrimination**

Although the constitution of Bangladesh and the general law guarantee sexual equality between men and women in Bangladesh, but our women never enjoy complete legal equality with men. Regardless of class and religion, women face discrimination in the areas of property ownership, marriage, divorce, guardianship over children, decision making power in their family life and outside activities and in the field of the justice system itself which has resulted in vulnerable position and situation of our women. These disparities encourage destitution and violence against women and impact negatively on their capability and on their sense of security, integrity and citizenship. The systems of patriarchy in Bangladesh are commonly identified by patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence (i.e. the practice of women living with their husband's kin after marriage) (Vicky, 1982).

Descent in Bangladesh is mainly organized along patrilineal lines. This patrilineal descent system has direct relevance to the place of women in society. A boy is the perpetuator of the patriline; he will continue the family name. By contrast, a girl is of no use in this respect. Her contribution in this sphere will have to be made in some other house (Monsoor, 1999). "A bird of passage", "another's property", "a guest in the parents' house", "a thing to be preserved for an outsider", or "a thing which has to be given away" are some of the common descriptions of a daughter (Towards Equality, 1974). It is generally said that educating a daughter is like watering another man's fields.

Women in South Asian region suffer limited access to the legal system due to lack of awareness, education, low social status and limitations on their public mobility. The legal discrimination is shown in the fixation of minimum age for marriage. In each SARRC country, the legal age for marriage is lower for girls than males. In Bangladesh, however, the fact of minimum age of marriage laws is rarely enforced and maintained. Though in South Asian countries marriage age for girls is in form but child marriage is accepted as valid, and while the perpetrators are liable to simple fines and imprisonment, they are rarely punished. Particularly, in rural areas of Bangladesh, the custom of child marriage is common. Sometimes parents of both families arrange contract marriage of a child girl and a boy as a conditional right to formally accept when they will reach at the legal age. Again, they also hide the real age of the girl child and give her marriage through the violation of existing laws regarding marriageable age (at least 18 years).

Discrimination also remains between a boy and a girl in birth and marriage registration systems which encourage forced marriage and the parents can avoid the existing laws regarding the age barriers. Moreover, parents in most cases register the birth of a boy and feel proud to become parents of a male baby; but the parents show less interest in birth registration of a girl baby. Marriage registration is absent in most communities of Bangladesh except the Muslims. The non-registration of marriage may create complexities and unresolved problems in the case of establishing the rights and entitlements of women and children in the time of divorce, widowhood, polygyny and forced prostitution.

In Bangladesh, marriage registration is compulsory and mandatory for the Muslims; but unregistered marriages are also occurring and being accepted as valid. Dishonest and inefficient activities of marriage registers are a serious concern for women. In many cases, no proper records or files are maintained by them and even there are several fake marriage registration forms which put their marriages under doubt and the girls become liable to criminal charges.

According to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1983, anybody giving or receiving dowry will be punished. Despite the existence of the Act, dowry has now become a common part of marriage negotiation, especially in the rural poor areas and illiterate-lower income region. Dowry demands have turned to a tradition and a majority of cases of domestic harassment occurs because of dowry demands by husbands and in-laws. The trend of taking dowry by the young males in the rural Bangladesh is increasing day by day because of rising unemployment. It is also seen as an important source of income, when the marriage negotiation includes a large capital to invest in productive sector or air ticket to the other developed countries of the world.

The amount or demand of the dowry is determined by the boy's family and the rate fluctuates according to the status, career, and education of the prospective groom. Violence against women is now considered as a national problem in Bangladesh. The sphere of domestic violence, cruelty to women for dowry and, other cases has become a grave issue (Islam, 1989). In fact dowry deaths have become an everyday happening in South Asia (Vyas, 1984).

In Bangladesh women suffer innumerable agonies by their husbands and in-laws due to failure of providing committed dowries.

The history of women burnt alive or killed by the family members of their husbands for failing to provide required dowry is now a common scenario in the print and electronic media. It has been rightly pointed out that dowry deaths are a gruesome reminder of the authoritativeness of patriarchy (Singh and Renuka, 1990). The dowry system is not recognized in the religion or the law of the Muslim societies but has spread into it (Sivaramayya, 1984).

Islamic law provides women's right of getting dower to enhance their position in family and society. But Muslim women become the victims of dowry instead of receiving dower. The Hindu women in Bangladesh have no rights on inheritance from their fathers. For this at the time of marriage, both parties make a negotiation regarding the giving and receiving list of materials or money in cash. The Hindu women inherit no property from their fathers and husbands. Thus they are discriminated doubly. The patrilocal social system also undermines women's autonomy in society. When a woman gets married, she has to cut off all the potential supports from her relatives. She has to match with a strange environment and with unknown people because the marriage is usually arranged with the negotiation of the guardians with some exceptions. The bride often becomes little more than a servant to her in-laws and she may not even be given adequate care in her child bearing period (Lindenbaum, 1973). In our society, many parents influence their daughters of ten or eleven, to marry the rich old man - owner of thousands of rupees. They see the old man's wealth only, but never think the future welfare of those girls.

When the old man dies, the shining little star has to come back with the ornaments and money. But in our social perspective, she does not keep alone without husband. The parents' cruelty is considered keeping the goat secured to the tiger. On the other hand, once the husband has gone, the whole world is seemed just a wilderness to her. In old days, a Hindu woman used to go as 'Sati' - that was good. She could turn herself to ashes along with her husband, and it was all over with. In Hinduism, a widow cannot remarry. But when a Hindu or Muslim male loss his wife, some days he remains in shocks. Within a short period, he forgets it and takes another wife. Bengali Muslim widow has legal and religious right to remarriage. But very few men are encouraged to marry her; moreover, the widows are not willing to get married again in fear of social criticism or sometimes thinking about the welfare of their children.

Dower is an important right of women, which is incumbent upon the husbands to give his wife under Islamic Law. The husband may pay it through cash or property. In principle, the practice of 'Mehr' is intended to provide basic financial security to those widows and divorcees and their children with no other means of support. However, in Bangladesh most of the women are denied of their 'Mehr'. The husbands offer some gifts to their wives and seek exemption from paying the 'Mehr'. A recent study of the metropolitan city of Dhaka indicated that although the Muslim family laws in Bangladesh require husbands to give dower to their wives, 88% of the women in the survey did not receive any dower (Akther, 1992 in Monsoor, 1999). If a man stands the risk of giving divorce to his wife, she makes a claim to her 'Mehr'. But, if the wife herself, initiates divorce proceeding against her husband, 'Mehr' is usually given up to obtain a quicker resolution of the case. Finally, the wide-spread practice of fixing a minimal amount of 'Mehr' (dower) also can undermine the system of financial security of poor women.

The patriarchal argument that women are subordinated by religion is not completely true, as even the rights which are granted in the religious law are often not enforced in a male-dominated patriarchal society; rather, it seems, the patriarchs of the society use religion to preserve their dominance (Monsoor, 1999).

Property and inheritance laws are discriminatory across the South Asian religion especially in Bangladesh. The inheritance of Muslims in Bangladesh is governed by the personal law. The fundamental principles of inheritance under Muslim Law are that nearer heirs exclude those further in degree. According to the Muslim rule, a female Muslim gets half of the share of a male with an equivalent relationship as a wife a Muslim woman inherits one-eighth of her husband's estate and if there is more than one wife, the property will be divided between them. If the husband has no children, wife's share increases to one-fourth. Thus a girl's portion of property always remains half of that of a boy.

Women's rights under Islamic law are often not properly implemented. Thus, there is evidence that it is usual to deprive women of their granted shares of interests for keeping the patrimony intact (Rahman, 1982). A study of two villages in Bangladesh revealed that 77% of women from families with land did not intend to claim their legal share in their parental property (Westergaard, 1983).

Sometimes women themselves ignore their rights of property inheritance to keep a cordial relationship with the parent's family, so that they have the opportunity to go there occasionally or "Naior". Women's renouncing of inheritance for 'naior' appears to be a fair exchange because their inheritance may be misused by the husband, while 'naior' is women's exclusive vacation (Begum, 1987). In the social structure of our patriarchal family, giving married daughters their rightful shares of property is often viewed as transferring family wealth to an alien family. Thus the Quranic law of fixed shares is viewed as contrary to the existing social structure and is often ignored or circumvented (Levy, 1962). In Hinduism, there is no property right of women and in ethnic minority communities women are not aware and even cannot imagine about the right of property.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **6.0 Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of Bangladesh**

The history of permanent establishment of Manipuri community in Bangladesh trails the legacy of the history of war and struggle in present Manipur state of India. So most of the Manipuri clans have chosen their residential area far away from Bangladeshi community and they want to maintain their own culture and civilization strictly to be close to nature. They are very conservative in nature and never welcome any unknown person to their clan; even they have restrictions to make friendship with the people of other communities. Bangladeshi (origin) people observe them in respect to the shell which generally grows kin interest to discover the hidden transcripts of this ethnic minority community. From sociological point of view, social science researchers conduct study on different aspects of Manipuri society in Bangladesh. In this study, the researcher tried to explore the discriminatory aspects between men and women in this community from different angles; because gender and gender discrimination are the household and burning issues of the day throughout the world.

For conducting study and obtaining the purposes of the study, the researcher stayed in three Manipuri villages: Ambarkhana, Vandari Gaon, and Soyosri respectively located in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, and Habiganj district. To meet the requirement of ethnographic study and to fulfill the researcher's desired objectives, participant observation has been chosen as basic instrument of collecting data and information. Hence, the researcher participated in different events of daily life of Manipuri community while staying with them. The researcher has stayed in Vandari Gaon village of Kulaura Upazila under Moulvibazar district for two months from April to June 2014; Soyosri village of Habiganj district for two months, July to end of August 2014 for directly observing the culture, living pattern, religious practices and other activities to grasp discriminatory approaches between male and female in Manipuri community. Ineed, the researcher herself live in Ambarkhana of Sylhet sadar which made her easy and simultaneous access to observe and participate with their life events. The researcher conducted two FGDs and collected information through in-depth interview from three different villages due to their different ethnic background.

The findings of my study are organized and presented according to the purposes of this study. The researcher has categorized the findings of this study into two broad categories: Nature causes and processes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community, and strategies to overcome the existing discrimination, and attach Manipuri women to the mainstream development of Bangladesh. These two main points are categorized into different relevant sub-points according to the answer of my research questions. Direct quotes and conversations with the respondents have been mentioned here directly to support the variables. Hence, the researcher used some local dialects directly collected from the respondents to make the view clear to the readers.

## **6.1 Nature, Causes and Processes of Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community**

### **6.1.1 Socio-Cultural Practices**

The existing socio-cultural practices and systems of Manipuri community are responsible to prevail and extend discrimination between male and female. The socio-cultural systems are patronized to serve the interest of the male. Manipuri society is patriarchal in nature, and male dominating attitudes are clear among them from the very beginning of their settlement in Bangladesh region. Manipuri women are in the iron chain of their social systems from birth to death. There are several socio-cultural systems and practices working as the mechanisms and leading tools of discrimination between male and female in Manipuri community of Bangladesh.

#### **6.1.1 a Discrimination Regarding Movement**

Like other Bangladeshi women, Manipuri women are not so free in regard to the movement. Generally, their family structure and system learn them pertaining to the internal affairs of household from their very childhood. When they go to school, market or other places even with their guardians, the remaining family members kept serious concern to their come back home. The girls and women of Manipuri society are not allowed to go outside alone after evening. Often they are not permitted to go outside alone at day time also. 'Where ever a wife goes she is bound to take prior permission from her husband first and next from the head of the family' (Mohen, 2005).

This results to strict maintenance of guardianship of men over women. During in depth interview a female respondent stated:



*“I have to face discrimination in my family, and till now I am suffering from different types of inequalities in my life. My parents took special care for my brother, and he has no restrictions to go anywhere any time. Even at night he is permitted to go outside and come back home. My parents never make him accountable regarding his movement. However, I had no right in my parental family to move freely and alone, and after marriage nothing is changed”.*<sup>24</sup>

The male dominant social structure and practices never permit girls to go to the relatives home alone. Either their parents or brother or other close family male members will go with them. Most of the respondents stated the fearness of sexual harassment both by Bengali and by the people of their own community behind these practices. The harassed and abused girls and women are neglected and dishonored in their community. They think girls as the burden in family for various reasons until getting their marriage, especially for lack of security. Hence the movement of the girls is very restricted even in the household. As Mohen said “the son is not accountable for his duties to the family, where as the daughter is, for all cases accountable to parents (Mohen, 2005).

#### **6.1.1.b Discrimination in Education**

Having poverty as well as opportunity, the educated Manipuri girls never serve as a house tutor to the Bengali community because of the imposed restrictions by their patriarchal social structure. The female students study in city areas far away from their clans never remain or stay at students’ hostel. Usually, they stay at their relative’s home. Who do not have any relative at the city area, they stay together in a mess with other familiar Manipuri female students. When Manipuri women travel to a journey, either their guardians go with them or see them off making proper arrangements for their safe and secured journey.

The education rate of women in Manipuri society was not mentionable prior to 1980s. However, it has been increased in the era of technological development due to the consciousness about the necessities of female education.

Most of the Manipuri girls pass the primary level of education and then they drop out either for economic crisis of their families or for long distance of the educational institutions from their homes. The rate of education among Manipuris are less compare to

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with a female Manipuri respondent, 18 May 2014.

the Bengali community, but the Manipuri women's position and process in education is very complex determined by their own socio-cultural approaches (Ahmed and Singh, 2007). Most of the Manipuri women are involved in weaving as the main part of domestic activities. The major portions of the male Manipuris are farmer. Beside these, there are some doctors, primary and high school teachers, health assistants, sales girls and students in their community.

The Manipuri society emphasizes on male's education as their permanent family members. Another important thing which discourages them is the inter-cultural and inter-religion interference regarding marriage system of their girls. Most of the educated Manipuri women claim that they don't find qualified bride for them in their own community. Recently, they provide reference that finding no qualified bride, some Manipuri educated girls get married to the people of other communities. As a result, the Manipuri parents are not interested to make their girls higher educated.

All time parents suffer in uncertainty and keep close observation to their college or university going girls. Apostatizing of their girls and getting marriage to other communities exclude parents from the privileges of social life as a punishment. The parents of the girls are bound by the imposed system of 'Panchayat' (traditional village institution) that is to be performed the 'Sradha' of those girls and they can never come back to their parents as well as community. The Manipuri parents also show discrimination regarding the education of their sons and daughters. The scenario of education amongst tribal women is quite disappointing. There is gender bias in the literacy of Tribal population as in other groups (Bodra, 2008).

Study findings reveal that having financial solvency some parents are unwilling to send their daughters to the private medical or universities for higher education. However, they prefer these private institutions for their sons if they don't get admission into the public universities. Girls are rarely permitted to go outside of Sylhet for the purpose of education, but boys have no restriction in this regard.

A female respondent noted:

*"My parents took special care regarding foods, clothes and education to my brothers. My utmost effort brings me to this position. In my parental family, I have no right to move freely and alone and after marriage nothing is changed. In Manipuri community girls are*

*negligible and deprived in every section of society. Although I am a service holder and have qualification of Higher Secondary Certificate pass, my parents have to pay the dowry demand of my in-law family.*

*She also added, "I have no economic freedom in family and all the decisions are taken by the male members. After returning from the school, I have to involve in all household activities like cooking, washing, cleaning, mopping, feeding, weaving and serving food. After wards, my mother-in-law dominates and treats me as a servant." At the time of coming back of the researcher, she said, "our social system is very cruel and fierce to the women. I will try my best to break this system of injustice in life of my own daughter. But I don't know what would be happened". She requested the researcher to pray to Almighty for her and for her daughter".<sup>25</sup>*

The Manipuri social and cultural practices make women subordination to male through prohibiting and imposing different conditions upon them which resists female to get equal opportunity of education. Since the 80's the number of higher secondary level girls were very few considering that they would be sent to husband's house; thus higher education is not a necessity in environment where they have to be good housewives only (Mohen,2005).

The culture also established the idea that girls are weak and less capable to acquire knowledge. The society determines the sciences and mathematics as the subject matter of male, where it seems that the women are not suitable for those complex subjects (Human development in South Asia Report, 2000).

During FGD a female respondent said:

*My parents were somehow flexible to my higher study, but the community members washed their brain threatening that I would be out of their control; and I could take any wrong decisions such as get affair and marriage with the people from other communities, forcedly rape, trafficking and any other types of violence which would stigmatize my family and community- my family members have to carry out this disgrace forever."<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with a female respondent, 12 August 2014

<sup>26</sup> FGD in Vandarigaon village, 27 April 2014

### **6.1.1. c Marriage and Partner Choice: Do Male and Female Get Equal opportunity?**

The marriage system of Manipuri community also expresses the deteriorating position of women in society. As a guardian of the girl, the elder brother or cousin has to come along with some invitation letters on banana leaves to the bridegroom's home. The girl's guardian has to stretch his body on the ground in front of the bridegroom and vow in submission to the parental family members. Being in this position, the guardian proposes the prospective groom to marry his sister.

The guardians of the bride also seek forgiveness over any disregard for cultural norms and values. There is no act of women or girls at the stage of marriage during the longer time of reciting the sacred text by the 'Purohit'. At the last stage of marriage, the male guardian of the girls has to bestow the bride to the bridegroom. No woman occupies the right of consigning the girl to the husband. If father or brother is not alive or available, the cousin or male relatives will complete the task.

Although marriage in different community is absolutely forbidden for Manipuris, the "Panchayet" becomes malleable in the case of violating this rule for a male; but in the case of a girl's fault, there is no alternative of doing 'Sraddha' and socially boycott of that girl. Manipuri male is considered to be eligible for getting marriage after the age of 25 years either he is employed or not; while a female is considered as the burden of the family after having matured. The parents think the matter seriously and try heart and soul to get a nice relation of her marriage.

A female respondent stated:

*"Boys get more opportunity and freedom than girls in our community. In the case of boy's fault, the social system and traditional 'Panchayet' is somehow flexible, where a girl does not get rid of this custom." She also added, "If a Manipuri boy gets married to a girl of other community, the 'Panchayet' solves this problem giving minor punishment and after some days the community accepts them. But in the case of a girl, there is no alternative to boycott her socially and arrange the 'Sraddha' of that girl. It is very rare that the Manipuri parents permit their daughters to go outside of Sylhet region for higher studies and services alone." She also said, "At the time of getting my admission in public university, my parents insisted that I make promise to accept a Manipuri bridegroom even*

*if he was not equally qualified like me and it was my fate.” She repents with sniffles “if I were a boy, I would be the happiest person in the world!”<sup>27</sup>*

The “Panchayet” plays an important role in every sphere of taking important decision in Manipuri community. The Panchayet is headed by aged male and comprised of dominating male members of that community. But no woman can participate as the member in the Panchayet, even if she is higher educated and knowledged person.

Actually, their social system and customs keep women under the control of men with the regular use of violence to ‘keep women in their place’. In response to the question of not involvement of female Manipuris in top ranked and important position of society, most of the respondents state that they are experiencing this system as the traditional legacy in their community which they bear and adopt as ritual rites. Women can never divorce their husband in spite of having filthy fault to them. Their guardians push and establish into them a sacred speech that husband’s homes are the last address for women. The divorce is rare in Manipuri community.



**Bride’s brother praying to bridegroom’s party to accept the invitation for marriage**

Only male can have occupied the right to divorce his wife showing any fault to the Panchayet and women have no right to divorce their husbands. In most cases, the Panchayet never looks into the allegation against the husband and takes decisions in favor of male.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with a female respondent, 21 August 2014.

They console the wife stating that your conjugal life will not be happy here and you should go to your parents' home taking some compensation. But the wife has no right at all to divorce the husband and a wife never submits allegations to the Panchayet against her husband. In Manipuri marriage system, it is observed that most traditional systems do not require registration of marriage and divorce. There is no written or valid documents remain as the strong evidence of marriage or divorce which may be the strategies for further actions otherwise. If the house wife conduct any fault or offence in the family life, then husband divorces the wife taking away all the ornaments and dress given earlier, but when the husband commits any fault the wife may leave him getting nominal existence of compensation, or continue the relations tolerating all other misdeeds(Singha,2007).

2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> wife taking in Manipuri society is very rare. Only male can take another wife after his wife's death or divorce. However, a divorcee woman or widow cannot get married again; even they cannot imagine doing that. According to the Hindu customs, no one in Manipuri community comes forward to marry widow and divorcee women, even does not receive as his 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> wife. The patriarchal social system establishes and entrench this unequal and discriminatory treatment for Manipuri male and female. Today, Manipuri girls have very little say in the choice of their partners. In the case of choosing bridegroom, guardian's decision is axiom and final; parents never evaluate or emphasis on girl's choice (Bodra, 2008). But at present, some guardians ask the girl whether she chooses the bridegroom or not. The girls become submissive and know that the decision is final; so they give consent only to maintain formality. The rules regarding divorce and remarriage have remained and practiced according to the Hindu customs, but rarely do women decide to leave their husband unless they are forced by circumstances, as they have become much more dependent on their husband. As most of the men have adopted the Hindu caste values, so no one comes forward to marry widow and divorce women (Badra, 2008).

#### **6.1.1.d Dowry as a Means of Discrimination and Subordination of Manipuri Women**

Dowry is another miserable and common feature of discrimination and oppression against women in Manipuri society. In every marriage, dowry is an established concept whether the parents of girls have the ability or not. Before finalizing the date of marriage ceremony, a bi-lateral negotiation is held between two parties (bride and bridegroom)

regarding the amount of dowry provide to the husband. The marriage would not take place unless the girl's family meets the demand of the bridegroom's family. The amount of dowry is raised if the bridegroom is educated and established, and parents of girls appear at the competition of providing big amount of dowry for their daughter's marriage.

At the first time of getting arrival of the bride to the bridegroom's home, the in-laws check the demand list and compare it to the given amount. This cruelty swallows up the society in such a way that every girl is concerned to this ruthless fate. Dowry is gradually extending bride- price, and women become in the danger of replacing commodity (Bodra, 2008). For this, most of the Manipuri girls involve in handloom for saving the dowry amount, thinking that their parents may not be capable to pay the dowry demand for her marriage.

After the birth of a girl baby in the family, the trained mother starts to weave handloom for managing the dowry for girls (Chakma and Zaman, 2010). Moreover, they bear the education cost doing handloom whereas a boy never thinks to bear his education cost of his own. Manipuri mothers are also concerned about the dowry for their girls and start weaving handloom to contribute to the dowry demand from the very rudimentary stage of a girl's birth. Usually, gold ornaments, cot, fridge, television, sofa set, cup- board, clothes, various furniture and all other household articles are provided as dowry in Manipuris.

A male respondent stated:

*"I am a shopkeeper; I have to manage my big family with this small amount of income. I have one boy baby and two girls, I do not think about the boy, as he will do something like me to afford his life. However, my main concern is my two daughters, now they are going to school. I do not know how long they will continue to the school. At the time of their marriage, I have to provide a handsome amount of money as dowry to get a good relation. Hence, I have bought a weaving machine so that I can deposit some money by weaving hand loom at home and selling them in the market. My wife and two daughters do this at the leisure time of our family".<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with a male respondent, 14 April 2014



### **Welcoming the bridegroom with gold necklace**

As Monsoor stated: “in the sphere of domestic violence, cruelty to women for dowry and other causes has become a grave issue. Women are expected to remain mute and suffer innumerable agonies at the hands of their husbands and in-laws if they fail to provide handsome dowries. Stories of women burnt alive or murdered by their husbands and in-laws for failing to procure the required dowry are not new anymore. Women continue to fall prey to regular harassment and disrespect. Dowry deaths are a gruesome reminder of the authoritativeness of patriarchy” (Monsoor, 1999).

#### **6.1.1. e Health, Nutrition and Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community**

Family planning method is rarely used to control the growth rate of population among them. No Manipuri husband uses contraceptive and a very small portion of women takes the responsibility. As a result, the fertility rate is very high among them, but the population growth rate is not so high because they do abortion in the case of unexpected and unplanned pregnancy. Abortion is not socially restricted and religiously forbidden. Furthermore, it is not considered as a sin. In the era of globalization and decentralized community health care services, they are not used to associate with mother's and child's health both antenatal and post-natal period.

They have little knowledge about the modern health care treatment, and women are less conscious about the balanced diet, even in the pregnancy period they do not eat any extra food considering their male members good health. So, various health risks arise among Manipuri women like anemia, malnutrition, dehydration, infection and other venereal diseases.



A large portion of Manipuri mother faces to several complex health situation, and died in her middle age (Mohen, 2005). The child is generally delivered by the untrained village wet nurse. After giving birth, both mother and baby are kept away in a corner of the house for twenty one days. In those days, the mother is given only liquid rice and some pulses without any protein and nutritious food which are essential for a mother to keep herself and baby safe. Nobody remains available always beside mother during this period; so, she has to take care of her baby herself. There is also a superstition to take bath after touching the mother and the baby within these days. She has to maintain the family burden just passing twenty one days in addition to the duty of motherhood. They are more conservative and restricted by the male dominant rules. Now they are used to traditional treatment (Jhar-phuk) instead of modern treatment. The delivery case of women are organized my village wet nurse which is called *Noukalpika* (Singha, 2007).

A female respondent noted:

*“My mother was a housewife. She took care of our family carefully. When someone in our family became weak, she first stressed to call on a traditional doctor (Quack), and she started praying to God for his/her quick come round. One day at mid-night she started vomiting with loose motion, we tried to control it by giving her herbal medicine made by my grandfather, but the condition was deteriorating. Next day after noon she requested my father to take her to the city medical, and just after a while she became senseless. My grandfather did not give permission to take her the medical, and lastly my mother died in the evening”.*<sup>29</sup>

#### **6.1.1. f. Eve-teasing and Sexual Harassment: Dimensions of Discrimination**

Manipuri women have to face different types of discriminatory attitude and harassment both in their own community and the outside. Eve-teasing and sexual harassment are the two common features of violence against them. Forced marriage by Bengali community is another imprecation both for the Manipuri girls and parents. Although it happens unintentionally, the Panchayet humiliates the parents and ostracizes the girl forever; and often the ‘Panchayet’ socially boycotts the girl’s parental family. The Manipuri women are usually raped by the Manipuri males and also by the Bengalees. But they never express it to the public due to the fear of society and future thinking.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with a female respondent, 17 June 2014.

A female Salesman noted:

*“Boys are seemed as the God-grace for the family and they get all types of facilities in family and society, where women are seen as the burden of the family. In Manipuri community, women have to take their meal at last after feeding the male members of the family and usually women eat less food compared to male.” She also added, “We are harassed mostly by the Bengali community. As we are poor, we have to work in different companies and shopping mall under the ownership of Bengalis. Taking this opportunity, the owners provide us less salary compared to other male workers although we are serving equally with our male colleagues. Eve-teasing and sexual harassment are the two common features of discrimination mostly occurred in the Bengali communities. We have no security on the way of schools, colleges and offices.”<sup>30</sup>*

Bengalis are the driving force of the Manipuri community and they control and operate them. The brutality of Bengalis and the marginal position of indigenous minority have been exposed in this common scenario of Bangladesh. The victims of eve-teasing may be physically harassed or mentally upset. Sometimes the teenager victims can neither tolerate the humiliation and control their emotions as themselves nor share to any other members of the family. Then they commit suicide. Eve-teasing also encourages early marriage (Siddiky, Ara & Khatun, 2015).

Moreover, rape and incest are the two cruel features towards women in society. In ethnic minority communities, this type of discrimination is most common. In this case, women have to face multi-dimensional agony and torture. If they express it to the family members, they compel the victims to be silent in the fear of social prestige and mockery. In the name of justice they have to be harassed in different forms.

Often, the victims are to be blamed and punished by our society instead of the criminals. Hence the society is the cradle of all kinds of discrimination against women.

*A female Student Expressed:*

*“My cousin was very close with my family members. One day, I went to attend a marriage ceremony with that cousin. Hundreds of people’s assemblage made the environment different. Everyone was busy with their own activities. I could not understand the ill*

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with a Manipuri sales woman in Rikabibazar, Sylhet, 20 January, 2014.

*motive of my cousin. At the time of marriage, everybody was enjoying the dance and deluded in the occasion. I felt tired and went another home to take some rest. The place was not so far away from my relatives' home, but it was relatively quiet and calm. My cousin followed and proposed me for physical relation. When I refused and tried to run out from the room, the vicious person closed the door, and pressed my throat hardly. He allured me to marry and threatened me if I makes a hullabaloo, I would be out caste from the society. He forcefully harassed me, but still I am carrying with the agony without expressing the true history to anybody due to the fear of my social system.<sup>31</sup>*

### **6.1. 2 Economic Control As the Weapon of Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community of Bangladesh**

Like our society, control over economy works as the key factor of dominating women by men in the society. In Manipuri society the male members grasp the controlling power of the economic sectors in different ways. Hence women become the sub-ordinate position in family and society, and depend on the men in every sphere of life, as having no economic independent. From the family, Manipuri women are observing and experiencing the male's absolute direction and control over economy, and in the husband's home they do not get any economic opportunity to be self dependent which make them taking the situation as their nature or fate. In addition to house hold works, most of the women in Manipuri community are involved in Handloom weaving, agriculture, and other income generating activities.

#### **6.1.2.a Does Handloom Weaving Bring Economic Empowerment of Women?**

Handloom weaving is the most common and popular income generating activity of Manipuri women. They sell it to the market after meeting the demands of their family members. Manipuri women are actively involved in earning activities, especially in handloom weaving by carrying their children on the back (Ahmed and Singh, 2007).

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with a female student, Vandarigaon Village, 10 May 2017



### **A Manipuri woman is Weaving Handloom At Home**

Their adroit and pungent weaving is really delighted in the field of handicrafts which demands in both home and abroad. But they are neglected and ignored in family in the sphere of economic decision-making, although they are performing more than seventy percent of work related to economy. They have no concern as well as freedom in terms of economy. Most of the women are dependent economically on their fathers or husbands. Whatever amounts they earn, the male guardians exercise authority in a lordly and imperious manner. In some cases, the drug addicted husbands ill-treat their wives and demand food, money and other things. Abusive language, beating and threats of ouster are often used by the disoriented husbands. Most often they forcefully take away the deposited money from weavings and services of the women thinking of no future of their daughters. Hence, through patriarchy, men not only control over women's labor in the sphere of reproduction but also control over their total labor – either production or reproduction. In which sectors women's labor would be exchanged for consumption is determined by the male head of the family. The women are surrounded by the patriarchal social structure, and unaware about their economic right.

A Manipuri house wife stated:

*“I have been weaving handloom for more than fifteen years, since the birth of my first girl baby. My mother-in law sold them in the market after meeting the demands of the family members. My daughter also weaves handloom to continue her education and to deposit some money for her marriage. However, almost all amount of money are handled by my husband”.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with a housewife, Ambarkhana, Sylhet, 25 February 2014.

In response to the question regarding the control over money through weaving, she said my husband is like God to me, He is taking care of us, giving us food, clothes, and medicine, so, I have no objection against him about the money that I earned by weaving.

### **6.1.2.b Agricultural Production and Discrimination**

Agriculture is the main occupation of Manipuris. It is their traditional livelihood and they get it on pedigree. As the Manipuris live in the plain land, the methods of agriculture are almost same to the mainstream people of Bangladesh. At present, they are introducing and applying a few scientific and modern technologies in the field of agriculture.

Both male and female in this society are working hard actively in their farmlands to be self-reliant in family life. They cultivate their lands using axe, cattle, plough, yoke, ladder etc. They weed out of the farmland through scythe and use insecticide to kill the insects. Besides household activities, the Manipuri women are equally involved in all stages of agriculture like sowing, harvesting, carrying the bundle of crops from the fields, withering-grinding and processing the crops, but ploughing (Sheram, 1996).



**Manipuri Women in Agricultural Sector in Soysri Village**

Manipuri women are actively working in the fields to prepare land, weed out, carry the crops from the field and process it to feed. Men have ownership of land and they maintain patrilocal rules of residence which enable men to use women's labor for their own purpose. Women labor in agriculture does not indicate their ownership. They provide labor power on land because of having close relation with men - fathers or husbands.

Actually, men control over the process of agricultural production and women have no power to touch the plough for cultivation as a social taboo. But male members of the family never ever support women in their household activities.

#### **6.1.2.c Discrimination in Choosing Services**

Only a few number of Manipuri women are involved in government and non-government services. In respect to the choice of service of girls, fathers and other dominating male members of the family play the determinant role. Men in Manipuri community get absolute freedom of choosing their career and profession, but for girls services of health and education sectors have been established as a common practice. Without an explicit exception, Manipuri women never imagine to go outside of Sylhet rendering a job as the Manipuris in Bangladesh live in Sylhet division. Furthermore, their parents or guardians never allow them to go outside alone. Because, they face some bitter experiences, while working among the colleagues of other communities as a member of a minority community.

Manipuri women are also treated differently in their workplace. They are paid less amount of salary doing equal works with their male colleagues. Although 5% quota in the Bangladesh Civil Service is reserved for indigenous community, their position in the Civil Service is very poor. They claim that civil service is a long distance from their primary objectives as they have no ability to cross the fundamental barriers in their daily lives.

#### **6.1.2.d Control Over Reproductive and Productive Functions: Who Won the Game?**

Women have no right to participate in the decision making process of conjugal life. The number of children and time of taking children is absolutely determined by the husband. Giving birth of two or more girl babies also indicates the fault of women and she is introduced as ominous in family and society. And in some cases husband takes second wife hoping to be a father of a boy baby hiding his own weakness.

Most of the Manipuri males are addicted to various drugs like Ganja, Haria and some Indian products crossing the border through black marketing. As the Manipuri clans are located near the borders between Bangladesh and India, they easily get these drugs. Usually, they take Ganja, and celebrate different occasions and ceremonies taking some special kinds. Addiction is an important factor responsible for generating discrimination against women in family and society.

Addicted people have no control over themselves. So, they commit different types of assaults and illegal harassments of women both physically and mentally.

The Manipuri women are involved themselves in weaving handloom with a view to saving some amount of money to face the challenges of emergency situation as well as economic solvency. Most of the Manipuri women claim that their husbands forcefully take this money from them showing some silly causes and the addicted husbands appropriate this deposit to afford their addiction expenditure. Otherwise, they threat their wives to divorce and they also torture them physically.

A female respondent noted:

*“God has created us to be harassed, dominated and deprived by male in the society. We work all day long, after doing all household works; we have to join in the handloom weaving and agriculture. We care and rare our children very carefully, we cook food for the family members and we clean the domestic goods and materials.*

*Men in our community stay outside the home and timely want food. I myself weave handloom whenever I get time, and sale them in the market. However, my husband is an addicted person, and he forced me to give him the money I earned by weaving. He sometimes tortured me, and threatened me to give divorce, if I refused to give the money. I have no deposit and no decision making power in the family, though I equally contributed here”<sup>33</sup>.*

Invisibility of women in the economy is a worldwide phenomenon, but in south Asia its impact on women is pernicious. As the majority of the women work in the informal sector, and as unpaid family helpers, their work goes unrecognized in national GDP (Human Development in South Asia Report, 2000). Though women do equal work with man outside the home, their burden of household work never be dwindled.

Today, the tribal women virtually a bonded laborer in her marital home she slaves for the family, while the men folk enjoy leisure, she struggles to manage the home and finances, while the male can be totally irresponsible with no social sanction. In the rural society, the responsibility of the male is complete the moment he holds the plough and prepares the field for cultivation. The tribal women are extremely hardworking and competent but she has little or no authority in the crucial decisions within the family and community.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with a female respondent, 03 July 2014.

Tribal society of the area studied is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. The man is the head of the household. Patriarchy is not simply control over women's body in the sphere of reproduction; it is control over her total labour, whether for production or reproduction. Women's labour is exchanged for consumption, which is determined by the male head of the household. The socio-cultural laws are highly discrimination against women in respect of the distribution of economic work and economic returns (Bodra, 2008).

#### **6.1.2.e Right to Property: How does Male and Female Count?**

There is no property and inheritance right of Manipuri women both from husbands and parents, and there are no established rules in this regard. According to their own religion 'Apokpa', they settled the issue of property inheritance. Sometimes, they follow the principles of Hindu law where property right of women is also over looked. Although it is said that the widow will get one-eighth of the total property of husband after his death, but in practice they are not aware about this right of inheritance.

A widow passes the rest of her life in son's family and never claims for the property right; in this way sons become the owners of that property at last. If there is no son, property ownership goes to the daughter. In the absence of child, the adopted child will get the ownership of property. But in the absence of both child and adopted child, the ownership of all the property goes to the hands of male's brothers and sisters. The social rules treat women differently men and generally as a subordinate. Manipuri women are still deprived of their rights. When the head of the family dies, the whole of movable or immovable property is inherited by the eldest son according to the Hindu law of inheritance (Mohen, 2005).

Generally, the sons inherit their father's property in equal proportion. Daughters have no property right in the presence of son ; but father can gift some property to the daughter if he wishes. If a Manipuri parents die remaining their unmarried daughter in the family, then some portion of father's property keep reserved to bear the expense of her marriage. A Manipuri widow achieves the guardianship over her husband's property until their children being matured (Singha, 2007). So, unequal distribution of economic power structure based on property inheritance existed in Manipuri community of Bangladesh, which may be the key point of gender discrimination.



A female Manipuri Student Said:

*“As a girl, I have no right in any aspect of life. My brother will inherit the property right of my parent. I have no property right at all, even after my marriage, I will not get the property of my husband. It hurts me hardly. Sometimes I cry alone to see the condition of female in our society. Hence, I think that it is the main barrier of ensuring equality between male and female in Manipuri community. I am a university student, so I have idea about this, but majority of women in our society do not know about the property right, as it is only the matter related to male. I wish if I were a boy”.*<sup>34</sup>

Women in Bangladesh are, thus, subordinated within an intensely hierarchical system of gender relations which constantly attempts to deny women not only access to social power and control over their own lives but also granted rights to which they are entitled. The material base of patriarchy is men’s control of property, income and women’s labor.

### **6.1.3 Political Awareness and Participation: Beyond Women’s Imagination, How and Why?**

Political consciousness among Manipuri women is totally absent. Because our political culture treats this minority community, as the less important and optional voters. The political leaders only communicate with them in time of election, but during the rest of the period the leaders never go to uphold their miserable situation. Manipuri people are less conscious about our national and local politics as they live far away from the Bengali community and our political culture hardly shakes them. Women’s participation in politics is more vulnerable in Manipuri community. They are not so much concerned to select the candidates for casting vote in favor of them. In most cases, the male guardian determines whether they will go to the polling booth or not.

The male guardians also impose their decision of selecting the candidate upon women for whom they will cast their votes. Hundred percent Manipuri women reply that they cast their votes according to the will and decision of their husbands, fathers or other influential male members of the family. The political situation of Manipuri male is also vulnerable; they are not aware of their political right and they cast their vote according to the decision of the Panchayet. In such a situation, the Manipuri women’s participation in politics is quite impossible and beyond imagination.

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<sup>34</sup> FGD with Manipuri Respondents, 11 April 2014

To Manipuri women, national politics and global out looks are unbelievable and beyond imagination, even most of the young and educated Manipuri girls having brilliant caliber also demonstrate total disinterest in political participation (Mohen, 2005).

A Female respondent stated:

*I do not know who is good or who is bad politician, rarely I read news paper, but I watch television. I enjoy cinema in CD. My husband at times watches bangle news in the television. At the time of election some candidates come to us to cast vote infavour of them. When the election is over, we hardly see their face in this chunk. So, we are not so serious about casting our vote. My husband usually talks to Panchayet, and then informs me to whom I will cast my vote. According to my husband's decision, I always do this.*<sup>35</sup>

They are not aware and interested in participating national and local politics; they have their own boundary and never cross the limits of family boundary without the permission of their husband, father or male Panchayet.

#### **6.1.4 Religious Practices and Traditional beliefs: Way to strengthen Discrimination in Manipuri community**

##### **6.1.4.a Preference of Boy Baby**

Generally, most of the Manipuri parents expect the birth of a boy child as a symbol of good luck. Some educated guardians opine that they expect and pray for a healthy and fully grown baby. However, they express the real picture of their feelings in a separate way for the birth of a boy and a girl which clearly reveals the unequal treatment between them as the starting point of patriarchal society. In “Sasmthi” ceremony both for a boy and a girl, the ‘Purohit’ (Tagore) who is male, can recite the spiritual text into the ears of the new born babies and the related functions are also performed by father, uncle or other male members of the family and no woman can perform this ritual task. Furthermore, this ceremony is celebrated with pomp and grandeur in the case of birth of a boy child rather than a girl child. The Manipuris retain a strong attachment to their traditional beliefs and practices. These traditional practices instigate the gender discrimination among them, like in marriage ceremony the **fangaruk**<sup>36</sup> (a basket made of bamboo full of sweets and cakes)

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with a female respondent, 27 August 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Basket of sweet and cakes brings to bride's home by an innocent woman

is carried out by the woman who has already been birth her first child male. A belief goes in Manipuri society that, the women whose tuft of hair end on foot, make sound with walking, dig soil with toe-nails, furry bodies like male and sprawl in front of door at night with undo braid are the symbols of portent and poverty (Singha, 2007).



**Fingaruk Bearing Women in a Manipuri Marriage Ceremony**

#### **6.1.4.b Family Practices and Rituals Socialize Manipuri Girls to be subordinated**

From their very childhood, mothers of Manipuri community make their daughters prepared physically and psychologically to be submissive to their husbands and in-law families after marriage. They also make them aware of some traditions in family like eating least and last, to be patience at the last stage of life, not raising voice about violence and discrimination against women, and to think themselves inferior and subordinate to the male members of the family.

Social values and norms are playing a crucial role in socializing a Manipuri girl and a boy. The respect for the husband by the wife is a value in the Manipuri society. Women carefully avoid calling the husbands by their names even at the cost of extreme disadvantage. They are generally loyal to the husband- loyalty being considered as one of the good qualities of a devoted wife. Manipuri women are very hard working. They manage all the domestic concerns; may more than that, they are more supporters of the families than their husbands are, and in many cases they support them entirely (Shyam Kishor, 1991).

In a Manipuri traditional family, the mother-in-law is a powerful figure, who rules the household direct on the shoulders of other women. In prosperous family, the role of mother-in-law is as strong as to influence sometimes even her husband and the management of the economy and daily life. But in a less prosperous family, a son or a housewife is more likely to establish his or her own household a few years after marriage. In that event, the power of mother-in-law is reduced and she becomes a subordinate only in her son's family. In traditional Manipuri society, the housewife usually takes less food at the last when other members have been served (Mohen, 2005).

A Manipuri woman is responsible for managing the household works, while maintaining and looking after her husband who supports the household. Most of the Manipuri mothers including their daughters maintain the concept of 'Lakshmi' for prosperity or good-luck. Besides, a mother is highly responsible for nursing her children and bringing them up, especially in the case of girls in the traditional society (Mohen, 2005).

#### **6.1.4.c Family Relationship and Superstitions: How do enlarge the Space of Discrimination?**

Discrimination against women in Manipuri community is also occurred and existed due to lack of smooth relationship between daughter-in-law and in-law families.

There remains a clear competition between mother-in-law and the bride. Psychological factors adversely affect the relationship. Mothers-in-law always try to establish the control over the bride and expect the support of their sons in this regard. Generally, they inherited this dominating culture from their past generations. So, women also discriminate another woman in Manipuri society. From the very childhood of Manipuri girls, they are taught to be submissive to the members of the in-law families. It is established that if they can adapt to the in-laws in spite of tolerating some illegal orders of them, then peace will prevail in the family. A woman has to maintain the ideal of a hard working person ready to sacrifice her own interest to the happiness of her in-laws without any demand in return. Wives are obedient to the husbands and in-laws without considering right or wrong.

In practice, the discriminatory pattern of Manipuri society between male and female is not smaller than the majority Bengali communities although it is invisible from outside looking. In time of menstruation, women in Manipuri society are treated as a contaminated or blemished thing.

During this period, they cannot enter into the kitchen for cooking and serving food for family members. It is also a pathetic sign that they lose the right of touching their husbands even they have to lie down separately on the floor.

A Male respondent noted:

*“There are some traditional practices and believes which are strictly maintained in our community. When a woman in our community faces in RITU (Period) once in every month, she becomes untouchable and symbol of impurity. She is strictly prohibited to touch her husband and cooking materials in the kitchen. If she does this, the living term of her husband on this earth will be shortening. In addition to that she has to lie down on the floor, not on the bed”.*<sup>37</sup>

Hence, not only the family pattern and practices but also the traditional beliefs help to establish and extend the discrimination between male and female in Manipuri community of Bangladesh.

#### **6.1.4.d Cultural Trap and Gender Discrimination in Manipuri Community**

Being habituate in the cultural trap, Manipuri mothers provide less food to their girls compared to their boys. The husband acts as like as the alive ‘God’ on the earth. The wives in Manipuri community devote themselves to the worship of their husbands. If otherwise the husbands torture physically and threaten them to get out from home and divorce. But the wives never ever imagine leaving husbands home till death. Manipuri religious beliefs and cultural practices make women subordinate to men. They perform the religious functions as the passive performer and they can never hold the position of ‘Purohit’.

Manipuri women face discrimination from birth to death. If someone dies in their families, women own have no right to set fire into the mouth corpse at the time of lightning the funeral pile. Only the son can do this; having no son the nephew or any male relatives will perform this task.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with a male respondent, Vandarigaon Village, Moulvibazar District, 08 May 2014.

## **6.2 Strategies to overcome the existing discrimination in Manipuri community and attach Manipuri women in the mainstream of development of Bangladesh**

There is no special arrangement both from government and Non-Government Organizations to improve their situation. The government only reserved 5% quota for the indigenous communities in the civil service of Bangladesh, but most of the students of Manipuri community cannot pass the primary level, so it is a big challenge for them to pass a long distance getting the civil service. Indeed, the quota system is value less to them.

A male respondent stated:

*“Most of the people in our community are in hardship, and they have to face a large number of difficulties in their daily lives. I am a graduate, and rendering my service as a family planning assistant. You will not find any graduate in this village, even most of them are involved in small business and agriculture, so quota in civil service for our community is like buying land for us in the March”<sup>38</sup>*

At the time of national election most of the candidates visits the clan to request them for casting votes in favor to the candidate, but after election they never remember us and the given commitment.

The government announced different opportunities for protecting the human rights of the indigenous communities of Bangladesh, but very few of them have been implemented yet. Usually they live far away from the mainstream community, so most of the public facilities including educational institutions, healthcare centers, cities, are in a long distance from them. The roads, electricity and other communication system are not satisfactory. In the age of globalization cell phone is available in all regions, however, the researcher herself found no network in the cell phone to communicate with the family members while staying in the Manipuri villages.

Almost all the respondents said that Ethnic Community Development Organization (ECDO) is only working for the development of other minority communities like Garo, Khasis, Orang, Patro, but not for the development of Manipuri community. However, ECDO is providing sewing machine and tube-well to the ethnic minorities, but does not perform any activities for their development.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with a male respondent in 16 May 2014

Most of the respondents claim that although ECDO receives a handsome amount of fund from the foreign donor agencies for the welfare of the ethnic women, the authority defalcates and misuses the fund. The Manipuri women are insulted for their own language at schools, colleges, universities, market and work places. Government sponsored vigorous action to improve the status of women was not only to legitimize elite rule but to acquire more aid from the donor agencies by giving attention to women. Not only the government but also NGOs used women's issues as a potential source of funding (Monsoor.1999).

In response to the question of strategies to develop gender relations and make their involvement in the overall development of the country they suggested the following mechanisms on an average:

a. **Financial solvency providing low interest Bank loan for Manipuri people:**

Economic crisis is the main barrier of the people of this community to live in a civilized way. If the government and NGOs provide loan or other financial support, then the people of this community will be motivated to send their babies in the school, and to invest money in other development sectors, which will enhance the opportunity of both male and female to be self dependent. Hence, their children will be educated as the effective output of the society, and they will also contribute to the national development through providing services for the common people. It will also empower women, as extending the opportunity of financial control of their own.

b. **Educational Institutions close to them:**

Most of the universities and other educational institutions are far away from the Manipuri settlements, so the Manipuri babies, especially the girls cannot get the opportunity of receiving higher education. The Manipuri society never allows girls to go outside the home alone, due to lack of security and fear of harassment both by the Bengali and the people of their own community.

A Manipuri girl noted:

*“Our parents treat boy and girl differently. After taking education at the primary level, they stop our education, as the high school and college are a long distance from our home. However, the boys can go there. Our society is very conservative, and girls have to be accountable to the parents for everything. There are many superstitions and bad practices which inspire male to dominate women and girls.*

*I think that if we get educational opportunity, our perceptions and outlook will be broader. Then our women will enjoy equal opportunity and contribute to the development from family to state”<sup>39</sup>*

**c. Change Bengalis attitudes towards the Manipuri Girls**

In most cases, the Manipuri women and girls are harassed and teased by the Bengalis in the public places. The Manipuris are minority group, so the mainstream people sometimes attack them and give threat to kill them. At present the unequal relationship and marriage between Manipuri and other communities are the major concern of the Manipuri parents.

A female respondent stated:

*“We want to educate our daughters, but we pass every moment with deep anxious while they go to school and keep concern until their come back home. A few days ago, an established Manipuri girl, who studied in a university, has got married with a boy of other community. Her parents tried their best to rescue her, but lastly they had to arrange “Sraddah” for staying in the community”.<sup>40</sup>*

Sometimes the people of Bengali community harass Manipuri girls in the work place and market place. Recently, some land has been seized by the Bengali people from Manipuri people forcedly claiming as Khash land. They claimed in different government sectors, and also arrange “Shalish” to protect their land right, but did not get any positive result.

The Manipuri people live in their settlements with fear and anxiousness, which squeeze the space of women’s benefits as well as opportunities. Hence, with the help of all Bangladeshi people it is possible to overcome discrimination between male and female in Manipuri community.

The existing laws should be applied equally and strictly in the case of harassment and violence. They also mentioned effective and technological training both for male and female of their community to develop practical skill with a view to coping in the modern world. Furthermore, they proposed that some religious beliefs, cultural practices, and male’s attitudes in the family and society should be changed to overcome gender discrimination.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with a female respondent in 12 July 2014

<sup>40</sup> Interview with a housewife , 23 July 2014



### **6.3 Justification of Objectives and Research Questions**

The main objective of this study was to find out the level and causes of gender discrimination in the Manipuri community in Bangladesh. The level of gender discrimination in the Manipuri community is high which is unknown to many as they never disclose it to the people of other communities and this trend has been established or rooted in every sphere of society. So it has been metamorphosed into a common practice. Furthermore, their locations are far away from the mainstream and they always prefer to keep themselves separate from people of other communities. Their restricted traditions are the main barriers to paint the real picture of existing discrimination through conducting research. Their custom and religion are the main causes of gender discrimination. In addition, social system (patriarchy), pattern of family, illiteracy, lack of awareness, traditional practices and religious beliefs, and lack of government and nongovernment initiatives are the superficial causes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community. To fulfill the broad objective, the study was concentrated on the following specific objectives:

#### **6.3.a To identify the nature of awareness among Manipuris regarding the existing gender discrimination in their community:**

Both Manipuri male and female are not aware about gender discrimination in their community. They are usually habituated with the unequal treatment in family and society.

Males think that their domination over the females is the inherited and established practices in the community whereas women also adapt with this unjust attitude and consider the established practices as their fate. Both male and female have accepted this social system of discrimination as the general rule against which they never react.

#### **6.3.b To provide an opportunity for sharing specific and common experiences of Manipuri women within their social context:**

The Manipuris are very conservative in nature and never welcome any unknown person at home. Their social structure and family pattern make women more conservative and restricted. Manipuri women never enjoy the opportunity of sharing their bitter experiences and grievances of gender discrimination to anybody either within their own community or the outside.

Many works have been done on their socio-cultural conditions and aspects, but a small number of research works has been conducted on the discrimination issues from sociological standpoint of view. So, they spontaneously shared their feelings and experiences with the researcher regarding this issue. They enjoyed the floor or space of sharing their opinion as nobody goes to hear them. Firstly, they denied the researcher because they were scared at the stranger, but after a few days the researcher developed informal relation with them; then they became free and easy to the session. They never face the court to get justice from the family and husband.

**6.3.c To explore the nature of participation of Manipuri women in socio-political and economic sectors, specially their access to resources, services and income generating activities:**

From socio-cultural perspective, Manipuri women play an important role but unfortunately they never enjoy freedom of choice and they perform the passive role as determined by the male. In the case of marriage from primary to final stage, all the decisions are taken by the dominating males, women have no participation in the decision making process of social aspect; even the choice of life partner for the girls is also done without any concern of the girls. In the marriage, the 'Firgaruk' bearers (the pure, Lakshmi and socially accepted women) are also determined and nominated by the male dominated 'Panchayet'. Political participation of Manipuri women is totally absent; even Manipuri males are not aware and interested in politics. Study findings reveal that Manipuri women cast their votes according to the wish and will of their family head. In both local and national politics, Manipuri women's participation was not found as elected or nominated representatives.

Manipuri women are contributing a lot to foster the economic condition of their families as well as the nation. The study shows that in addition to doing all the household activities, they are participating in weaving and agriculture. Indeed, they are performing more than half of the tasks related to economy, but their participation in the economic decision-making process is a matter of controversy. Some Manipuri women are involved in services (both public and private organizations) and in business, but the financial decision remains at the hands of males. They have no property right both from husbands and parents.

## **6.4 Justification of Research Questions**

To conduct the research successfully, the following questions have been raised:

### **6.4.a Whether and how is gender discrimination remaining in Manipuri community of Bangladesh?**

Study findings expose that women's position in Manipuri community is lower from the historical period of their functions and establishment in Bangladesh. From the early period, women are considered as the inferior and key agent of reproductive as well as household activities. It is found that women will remain at home and men will perform the managerial and outside activities including war.

Discrimination is shown to Manipuri women from birth to death. In family and society, they enjoy less freedom of choice in the domains of food, education, movement, services, marriage, and access to resources and income generating activities compare to men. They never think of participating in the decision making process. Manipuri women are not aware about their fundamental rights especially on health. Till now, they depend on 'Kabiraj' and local quack for their treatment. During the antenatal and postnatal period, Manipuri mothers do not get enough support to save the baby and themselves. They rarely use contraceptive and any family planning method.

### **6.4.b What are the underlying causes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community?**

There are a number of factors that are responsible for gender discrimination in Manipuri community. Historical legacy construct the fundamental policy of leading the lifestyle of Manipuris which brings the sign of discrimination against women. Social system, male dominated patriarchal social structure, traditions, customs, values, religious beliefs, superstitions, lack of education, lack of awareness and consciousness, lack of government and nongovernment initiatives to develop their situation and to involve them in the mainstream of national development, lack of political participation — both at local and national level, and lack of opportunity of participating in the decision making process as equal to men as well as treating them as minority community are the prime factors and underlying causes of gender discrimination in Manipuri community.

**6.4.c What are the strategies to overcome the existing gender discrimination and to attach them in the mainstream development of Bangladesh?**

Although it is difficult to eliminate the remaining degree of discrimination between male and female in Manipuri community, the collective efforts of government, NGOs, civil society, academics, Bengali and Manipuri representatives can reduce the unequal treatment between men and women in the Manipuri community through which they can be attached in the mainstream of development endeavors and they can be the partners of holistic development of Bangladesh. But the prime effort should be started from the family.

## **6.5 Challenges of the Study**

As the Manipuri community prefers to be isolated from the mainstream of national people and maintains a distinctive and restricted culture-traditions, conducting a research especially on gender issues in their community is very challenging for the researcher. Their social system is closed and highly patriarchal; so women's involvement in any formal or informal session cannot be imagined at all.

The major challenges faced by the researcher at the time of conducting research activities in Manipuri community are stated below:

### **6.5.1 Language Problem**

The main language of this ethnic minority community is Manipuri, and most of the older Manipuris don't know Bengali language. So it is a great barrier for the researcher to understand the responses of the respondents. A two-way communication problem appeared between the researcher and respondents. The people of new generation of Manipuri community help the researcher and the respondent for better understanding of the term. The researcher also learned some Manipuri languages to serve the purpose of the research.

### **6.5.2 Lack of Availability of Materials**

Since a very few studies have been conducted by the academics or social scientists on gender discrimination in Manipuri community, the researcher did not find enough specific materials like books, journals, articles and previous research works on this issues.

### **6.5.3 Conservativeness**

The Manipuris are very conservative and never permit any stranger at home. They do not want to communicate or even to talk to the unknown person. Firstly, the Manipuri women shut door seeing the researcher in the yard. The researcher informed the respondents about the purpose and assured them to maintain confidentiality. After passing a long time and building informal relation with them, the researcher obtained the right to free movement and communicate with the people in their community. In all research areas, some familiar Manipuris helped the researcher to observe their culture and obtain data.

#### **6.5.4 Time Constraint of the Respondents**

The Manipuris are very industrious and they always keep busy with their household and professional activities. Especially, women of this community are more engaged with weaving, household activities, agriculture and business. So, they did not want to consider the time for taking interview and discussion.

#### **6.5.5 Wider Concept**

Gender discrimination is a burning issue throughout the world, and the concept includes wider focus of different angles. So, the wider concept made it difficult to cover the whole area.

#### **6.5.6 Lack of Awareness**

Gender discrimination is a very sensitive issue and it is well established in Manipuri community like a common trend and rituals. They usually think that it is the common phenomenon of their daily lives and thus they accepted it without thinking any alternative. They are not aware about gender discrimination; hence the respondents were sometimes unwilling and remain in dilemma to provide relevant information. So, it was very difficult to explore the real situation that has been accomplished successfully by the researcher.

#### **6.5.7 Formalities**

The Manipuri community is generally directed by the order and direction of the 'Panchayet.' Before taking permission from the 'Panchayet', no respondent cooperated and participated in the study session with the researcher. It took a lengthy process to take permission from the 'Panchayet' of every village of Manipuris.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**CONCLUDING REMARKS WITH POLICY**  
**IMPLICATIONS**

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Concluding Remarks with Policy Implications**

The Manipuri community settled in Bangladesh during 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their settlement in Bangladesh contains the historical legacy of war and conflict in the state of Manipur of India. As the indigenous people, Manipuris are neglected in every sphere of life. And the Manipuri women perform the job outside and carry out a full load of household activities. Though Manipuris are ethnically and ancestrally included within the indigenous section of population in Bangladesh, the Manipuris feel dishonored to introduce themselves as ethnic minority group. This type of attitudes towards them restricts from gaining positive discrimination (quota reservation in civil service) in government job.

The knowledge about the health care facilities and nutrition among Manipuri women is very poor. Most of the Manipuri women suffer from chronic malnutrition and ill-health. Only the natural food system makes them sustained to a certain period of time. The rate of modern and scientific treatment among them is very poor and they are used to the 'Jarfuk' and 'Kabiraji' medicine for all types of diseases. Gender discrimination in Manipuri community is found in different forms, but the women never share it to anybody considering it as a matter of dishonor. They are operated by the traditional and inhuman rules and regulations. The Manipuri women face the discrimination and unequal treatment at every stage of life.

Manipuri women are very strong and active in weaving and agricultural sector in addition to the household activities. They are participating with the male outside the household task, but they are not relieved from the family burden and discrimination. Their social rules treat women differently from men and consider them as inferior and subordinate to men. Manipuri women never inherit property right and they never cross the boundaries determined by the husband and sometimes they are oppressed by the other members of in-laws. The Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh does not maintain any specific article or provision for ensuring the safety, equity, security of indigenous community. Their patriarchal social structure, religious beliefs, customs and traditional practices make discrimination between man and women; men are established and introduced as 'God' and women are considered as devotees or worshipers of males. Manipuri weaving is renowned and cheap in both home and abroad and women are the driving forces to lead the economy and afford the expenditure of the family.



Manipuri culture is also very rich which enlightens the glory of our national culture, and Manipuri women are the main bearers of this culture.

In view of the present findings and discussions, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Consciousness-building among Manipuri people should be given first priority to eliminate gender discrimination. Women should be realized the necessity of gender equality and equal rights in every stage of life, and the male should consider their contribution and think them as the equal partner of development.
2. The patriarchal social structure should be flexible both for male and female. The perception and attitude of male towards female should be changed positively, and male should consider female as human being rather than a reproductive machine.
3. Education is the first and foremost issue to eliminate gender discrimination among Manipuris. Education will remove the negative approaches towards women and broaden their outlook as well as ethical issues which will be helpful to establish gender equality in Manipuri society.
4. Reformation of their male dominated social institutions like marriage, family, 'Panchayet', religious institutions is very urgent to uproot the gender discrimination from the community. Women should be given space in the decision- making process in family and society. The Panchayet is comprised of only male, and its decision is final for solving any problems in Manipuris. Being a male dominated institution, it cannot be impartial and always shows favor to male. In 'Panchayet' equal participation of women should be ensured with male. Domination over Manipuri women resulting from the misinterpretation of religious beliefs and superstitions should be eliminated.
5. In the Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, the necessary articles and provisions regarding the safety and security of indigenous women should be introduced and operated throughout the country.
6. Local political leaders should take adequate initiatives to involve them in politics making them aware about national politics and ensure their participation in development. Political participation among Manipuris may grow leadership and decision- making capacity which is needed to raise the voice of Manipuri women against discrimination.

7. Government and non-government organizations should take adequate initiatives for the development of the miserable situation of this community, especially to improve women's position including health, education, awareness raising, food, participation in the decision making process. Huge number of constructive and proactive training programs should be arranged for Manipuris to change and develop their views and out look to each other. They should be considered as the partners of the holistic development process of the country. Furthermore, separate Ministry and Department should be set up for them to uphold the women's situation and for the betterment of the Manipuri women as a whole.
8. Self-help is the best help. As the Manipuri women are the key factors to the socio-economic development of their community, they should protest the unequal treatment and discrimination, and establish themselves as the active actors in the socio-economic arenas.

Lastly, it is concluded that there remains extreme gender discrimination in Manipuri community and it prevails like a vicious circle in the society. The Bishnupriya and the Meitei Manipuris hold the same picture of discrimination, but the Pangan is directed by the absolute code of Islamic ideology of Bangladesh. They are not only discriminated within their own community, but also they are discriminated and harassed by the male of other communities. Male domination and female subjugation, and the non-realization of women of being discriminated act as the prime source of other types of discrimination in Manipuri community. Although sometimes women can realize violence and discrimination by the male, they do not have the will, opportunity, courage and method to raise their voice against violence and discrimination towards them. Thus, it is responsible for the perpetuation of discrimination in Manipuri community. A Manipuri woman is typically a hard laboring person who is always ready to sacrifice her won interest for the happiness of her family members without any demand in return. She is discriminated and oppressed in every sphere of life. She is obedient to her husband and in-laws without considering right or wrong. Sometimes, the unemployed and drug addicted husbands badly treated their wives using abusive language and demand food, money to afford the cost of bad habit. Otherwise, they threaten them of ouster and divorce. Nobody will hear the voice of Manipuri women regarding the discrimination, if they don't break the silence and try to establish their equal rights in every sphere of life particularly starting from the family.

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সিংহ, ড: রঞ্জিত (২০১৪) বাংলাদেশের মণিপুরী সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতি, উৎস প্রকাশন, ১২৭, আজিজ সুপার মার্কেট, ঢাকা.

## **Annexure-1**

### **Interview Check-list for In-depth Interview**

#### **Personal Information**

Name:

Age:

Marital Status:

Occupation:

Educational Qualification:

1. What do you mean by equal rights in your family/society?
2. How do male and female treat in your community? Whether they enjoy equal right or not, if yes, in which spheres; if no, how are they treated differently?
3. Do women have equal opportunity regarding education and services? If no, why are they treated differently? If yes, how?
4. How women are treated regarding politics compare to male? If differently, how and why?
5. Whether Manipuri women enjoy economic freedom? If yes, how they do this both in family and outside? If not, why?
6. What types of inequality and attitudes do Manipuri women faces at the work place compare to male?
7. How is property distributed between boy and girl? Do girls have any property right in your community?
8. How does marriage held in your society? Is there any system to provide dowry? If yes, how is it maintained?
9. When and in what process divorce does take place? Is it a process to make women's subordination?
10. What are process of food distribution and treatment facilities among family members?
11. Do you think women get equal food and balanced diet to keep good health even in pregnancy period? If no, why are they treated differently?
12. How would you mention the present state of gender relations in your society?
13. Do you think Panchayet plays an important role which is not equal in favour of male and female? If yes or not, how does Panchayet perform it?

14. How does family and society make accountable a boy and a girl for their daily activities?
15. Why is religion considered as a pivotal social institution in your community? Do you think religious beliefs extend discrimination between male and female? If yes how, if not why?
16. Do you think male domination is existed on women's reproductive and productive roles in family and society? If yes, how male controls? If no, how women are free?
17. How does socio-cultural system practice in your community? Do you think, both male and female are justified here equally?
18. Do you think women are sometimes responsible to lead themselves in subordination? If yes, how? If no, why?
19. Beside your community, how are Manipuri women treated by the majority Bengali community?
20. Do parents treat boy and girl baby equally in your community? If no, in what aspects they show discrimination? If yes, how they maintain it?
21. How do house hold and other activities are distributed among male and female in your community? Do you think women do more work than men in your society?
22. Do you think women are given proper recognition for their hard working? If yes, how, If no, why are they not getting the recognition?
23. Is there any government or Non-government initiative to ensure equality between men and women? If yes, what types of initiatives, and how far are they effective?
24. What types of strategies or initiatives do you expect from the government to eliminate discrimination?
25. What reforms and activities do you suggest to develop gender relations and attach Manipuri women in the mainstream development of the country?

## Annexure-2

### Photographs

#### Researcher with respondents while collecting data











**Marriage ceremony of a Manipuri couple**





**Researcher visiting Manipuri region with some Manipuri women**



**Focused group discussion**





**Focused group discussion**



**Researcher gossiping with respondents**





**A Manipuri woman weaving handloom**



**Researcher observing household activities**





**Researcher taking some Manipuri snacks at the time of talking with them**



**Researcher with aged Manipuri couple**





**Researcher with a Manipuri family while staying there**



**Researcher with Manipuri freedom fighter Pratap Singha**



**Researcher taking lunch in a Manipuri home**



**Manipuri handloom**





Participation in a Manipuri marriage ceremony







**Fingaruk**



**Fingaruk bearing women**



**Welcoming the bridegroom with gold necklace**





Bride's brother praying to bridegroom's party to accept the invitation for marriage

**Participation in a Manipuri marriage ceremony**



**Researcher participating in a Manipuri bridegroom party**