

Manifestation of Empowerment of Meitei Women - A Study of Nambol Market in Manipur

Dr. Pooja Gupta

Associate professor, school of education, Noida international university

Abstract: In India, most of the societies are embarked and ruled by patriarchal system over centuries but towards northeast the picture starts to take turn. Manipuri women face less discrimination as compared to other parts of India. They are playing multiple roles in the society and equally contributing in the economy. Most of the markets in Manipur are run by majority of women which gives a reflection of women's empowerment and shows their economic independence. All selling and buying are done by these women. In valley, all markets and internal trade are carried on by women. The present study is focusing on the nambol municipal market in nambol region where most of the shopkeepers are women belonging to meitei community. To study the contribution and role of Meitei women in nambol market, thirty case studies have been done through randomly selected women traders. Interview and discussions were made to collect the data. The result shows that most of the women are between the age group 40-50yrs and majority of them are 10th pass. Their trading items ranges from vegetables, fishes and other grocery items to cosmetics, ornaments and cloths meitei women are playing a major role in managing the economies of the house.

Keywords: women empowerment, meitei women, nambol municipal market, manipur.

1. Introduction

In india, most of the societies are embarked and ruled by patriarchal system over centuries but towards northeast the picture starts to take turn. There is a small state, manipur with beautiful landscape and breathtaking scenic beauty of nature. In its west assam is present while nagaland and mizoram border it from the north and south respectively. In today's time where women's safety is under question mark, manipuri's women have shown courage to step out and walk equally with a man. Mary com, world champion and olympic winner and many other have shown exemplar strength. The world's famous khwairamband bazar or ima market in imphal, is the only market in the world that is run by women only. There are about 4000 women shopkeepers who have set a glorifying example of women's empowerment. Most of the markets in manipur are run by majority of women which shows their economic independence. This study is focusing on the nambol municipal market in nambol region where most of the shopkeepers are women belonging to meitei community. Historical evidences reason out the emergence of such market and the central role of meitei women in developing these markets. It is believed that because of *lallup* system(where a man go away from the family to serve the country for a long time) women came out to run markets and made earnings for their family. at that time many wars took place between india, china and southeast asia which compelled men to leave their homes and pushed women to take care all the responsibilities of house as well as of village tasks. This way markets like the mother's market came into it existence. In the last two centuries wars and other activities

have transformed the social structure of manipur and the ima market but the traditional organization of the market remained intact. Now most of the people call it as women's market rather than mother's market, showing the changed picture of women's representation in the society. Past and present pictures of market give the reflection of bravery and struggling life of manipuri's women.

2. Nambol municipal market

Nambol is a small town in imphal having a population of 18,117(according to 2001 indian census).50% population is female and 50% population is male. The average literacy rate of nambol is 68% which is higher than the nation's average59.5%. Nambol is considered as one of the educational hubs of manipur. Nambol municipal market is the second busiest market after ima bazar. It is famous for nambol bora, a local snack. Nambol market is dominantly run by women. They are principally involved in handloom and weaving work. Last year, mahud minister shyam kumar said that market should have all facilities like drinking water, fire safety arrangements and toilet facilities. Proposal in this regard has already been sent to the ministry of urban development, government of india but meiti women are still waiting for new market building.

3. Objectives of the study

The main objectives are-

- 1- To study the organizational structure of nambol market.
- 2- To study the contribution / role of meitei women in nambol market.

- 3- To analyze the problems of women traders in nambol market.

4. Methodology

In the present study, data was collected by using unstructured interview and observation method. Randomly selected thirty meitei women were interviewed and discussions were made to understand the problems faced by them. To understand the organizational structure of the market observation method was used and some factual information has also been collected from municipal office.

5. Organisational structure of nambol market

In nambol market, there are 385 shops. Among these 220 shops are registered shops of nambol municipal council. There is as such no division in the market on the basis of selling products. It is a small market so there is no any demarcation of entry and exit gate. In this market many items are traded which ranges from daily consumption like vegetables, dried fishes, smoked fishes, grocery items, plantain leafs to varieties of clothes, jewelry and ornaments. Both primary vendors and secondary vendors are present in this bazar. Primary ones are those who sell their items grown in their locality while secondary vendors collect them from primary vendors and sell them at a higher rate. Most of the women traders belong to meitei community, some are from tribal groups and other communities. These women generally buy their products from imphal market, nambol naorem and bishnpur market.

6. Case studies of women traders

In order to understand the contribution of meitei women in society and the problems faced by them, thirty case studies have been done through randomly selected women traders. Interview and discussions were made to collect the data. Few case studies are mentioned below:

- 1- Smt. Thokchom tombi devi-
She is 45 years of age belonging to meitei community. She sells vegetables in this market from last 2 years. She takes these vegetables from farmers. She is 10th pass and earns daily about rs.500. She has taken no loan from anywhere and this is not her own shop.
- 2- Smt. Loitam sangeeta devi-
She is 42 years old meitei women. She is having her own cosmetic shop without any loan. She has been in this market for the past 9 years. She is 10th pass and earning around rs 1200 per day. She takes these items from imphal market.
- 3- Smt. Lily chiru -
she is 36 years old and operating in this market from 4 years. She is also 10th pass and belonging to tribal community. She earns daily about rs. 600 by selling vegetables which

is grown by her. She is not having her own shop and no fixed place for selling.

- 4- Smt. Pukhrambam baby devi-
She is 40 years of age and selling grocery items in this market for the past 3 years. She belongs to meitei community and 10th pass. She is having her own shop and earns daily rs. 500. She has taken no loan from any bank
- 5- Smt. Jibalata chingakham-
45 years old lady comes from khajiri mamang leikai, nambol. She is 10th pass and sells fish and other items in the market for the last 3 years. Her earning is rs.500 per day, she buys these items from imphal bazar. She is having her own shop.
- 6- Smt. Torjam loidang devi-
Smt. Devi is 47 years of age. She has been in this market for the past 3 years. She is 12th pass and selling clothes. She collects the material from moreh. On an average she earns about rs. 1200 per day. She wants to enlarge her shop to increase her earnings.
- 7- Smt. Oinam rajashvori -
Smt. Oinam is a 53 years old meitei woman who is selling her cosmetic products in this market for the last 12 years. She is 10th pass and having her own shop. She buys all products from imphal market and earns daily rs. 500.
- 8- Smt. Naorem indubala devi-
Smt. Devi is 38 years of age. She is 12th pass and selling utensils in this market. She buys her goods from imphal market and operating here from past 15 years. Her earning ranges from rs. 1,200-1,000 per day. She is having her own shop.
- 9- Smt. Loidang devi-
she is 48 years old and selling fish and vegetables from last 6 years. She is 10th pass. She is earning about rs. 1000-700 per day. She is not having her own shop. She collects it directly from farmer's farm.
- 10- Smt. sapam bembem devi-
She is a 47 years old meitei lady from the area nambol makha leikai. She is 10th pass and having her own shop. She is selling fish from last 7 years. She earns daily rs. 500.

7. Results and discussion -

Nambol market is the second busiest market where varieties of items are sold. Its operation is under the control of meitei women and women from tribal community. Majority are from economically backward class and 10th or 12th class pass. But they are running their shops very efficiently. Their low education level is not an inhibiting factor in their working. In fact, they are well aware of all the happenings around the world and their talking are based on some useful discussion not mere gossiping. Ghosh, gupta and dhar (ed. Kanungo,

1998), in “women and entrepreneurship in india” also observed that most of the women were high school passed but to become economically independent and for self-fulfillment, they started their business ventures. Sorikhaibam and laishram (2011) also found in their study on ‘women entrepreneurship in manipur, north-east india’ that the main reason to start their enterprise was to become independent and earn more money to have better status in the society and afford high standard of living.

Average age of vendors in nambol market is 45 years and above. Few young ladies are also working in the market but the number is considered negligible. Most of the women are having their own shops and very few have rented one in the market. Their husbands are doing farming or other activities at home. The contribution of husbands in running these shops is negligible. Their earning generally ranges between rs.12,000- 20,000 per month and few are earning more.

these meitei women are running their shops to support their family, providing better education and status to their children and to improve economic status of their family. Wadhera and koreth (2012), in their study on “empowering rural women: micro- enterprise through achievement motivation” also observed that most of the women were illiterate and below 40 years of age and they started their businesses to support their family. Chandralekha, kalyani, and lavoie(ed. Thakur, anli kumar and rahman,2009) did a study on “microenterprise management by women in india” and found that supporting family income and providing better opportunities to their children were the factors for running their businesses. A study done by bhadra in 2009 on tribal women in kokrajhar distict also support the idea that acute poverty and maintenance of household were the reasons for becoming entrepreneurs.

The meitei women are facing few challenges/ problems in running their shops in nambol market which are mentioned below:

- Their profit margins are low due to competition among them. There are many shops for each item. Even lots of fish vendors are there causing low income of fish seller.
- customer count is low which is again reducing their sale.
- Some shopkeepers are not having enough space for keeping and selling their products. Few shop owners want to enlarge their shops.
- Tribal women are not having fixed place for selling their items.
- Some women are facing money problem, family problems and problems related to investment.
- Facilities and other bandh problems are also there.

Thus it is observed and analyzed that meitei women have become empowered and economically independent. They are not dependent on their husband or head of the family for financial matters. They are contributing in improving the economic conditions of their family as well as society. Ghosh

(3) also shows that the manipuri women are occupying high position because of the unique factor of the women folk to manage and control the trade and commerce in the state while this is mostly controlled by menfolk universally. Meitei women have established a position and status in this patriarchal system of society which is the result of their hard work and self-determination. Kumari (5) also found the same in her studies that there is a positive relationship between women’s work and male view regarding issues relating to the status of women.

8. Conclusion-

Women participation improves the economic condition of family as well as society. The present study reveals that most of the respondents were between the age group of 40-50 years. They are not highly educated, mostly educated up to 10-12th class pass. They are generally having shops leased from municipal office, very few are in private rented shops and their earning lies between rs.12,000- 20,000 per month. They are running their shops to support their family, to provide better education to their children, to earn their livelihood, to get social recognition and ultimately they want to be economically independent. In spite of having so many problems, they are happy in their busy life. They are contributing to society according to their capacity, culture and tradition and playing a big role in improving the status of women on this platform.

9. References

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