

RURAL ECONOMIC SCENERIO OF MANIPUR

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Abstract

Development of rural economy of an under-developed state like Manipur is a complex exercise because of its multiple problems. Rural economy of the state is handicapped by large scale poverty, unemployment, under-employment and backwardness. Moreover, due to lack of knowledge and physical connectivity people in rural areas cannot take part in the development programmes initiated by the central and state Governments. Development of rural economy is essential because an overwhelming majority of people live in rural areas and, at the same time, development of rural economy is essential to the acceleration of pace of the overall economic development of the state. No development programme can succeed unless it centres around rural development of the state. In the present context of Manipur, rural development is conceived by the Government with the assistance of Government Officials and urban intelligentsia, who have poor knowledge of rural economy. An attempt is made in this paper to study rural economic scenario of Manipur in depth so as to suggest ways and means for a healthy rural life in the state.

Key words: Economics, population, development, occupation, poverty, land, society, growth, rural economy.

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Introduction

Manipur is one of the economically backward states of the North Eastern Region of India. Being one of the states, least integrated with the national economy and accompanied by a high rate of population growth, it displays a number of peculiarities particularly relating to the crucial aspect of its agricultural progress and rural development. Even after the completion of 50 years of economic planning and introduction of the Green Revolution in the early 1960s, agricultural performance of the state has not shown any appreciable change during 1951 to 2008. However, in the economic planning of the state, the objectives of utilizing untapped growth potential of agriculture in the context of the rapid increase in the size of rural labour force has always remained without receiving the priority it deserves.

Agriculture plays a strategic role in the process of economic development of a country or state. In a poor state like Manipur, where there is no big industries, role of agriculture is of vital importance. However, agriculture in the state is carried out as a subsistence activity by engaging a large surplus worker with insignificant contribution to production, yet claiming its full share in consumption. In terms of number of workers engaged, this sector has been occupying a dominant place in the economy of the state. This may be due to lack of job opportunities in other sectors of the rural economy. Horrible reality is that despite a large number of workers and fertile land our agriculture cannot supply rice, which is the only main product, for the population of the state. Thus, the state has been importing a huge quantity of rice every-day from other states at a high transport cost. Besides rice, other agricultural products viz. potato, onion, other cereal crops and poultry feeds are also being imported from other states. The present trend shows poor performance of agricultural practice in the state. In fact, food security of the people of the state is threatened.

Poor rural farmers, on the other hand, are not willing to stay on land as agriculture is not remunerative. Rich land owners are also not ready to invest on land as it is not profitable. Many factors have contributed to the present condition of backwardness of agriculture in the state. Agriculture has to be economically competitive and simultaneously remunerative to the farmers so that farmers can continue to stay on the farm and make enough income to gain higher standard of living. Profitability of resource use is important not just productivity of land. Only when

agriculture is properly developed and remunerative rural labour force, educated or un-educated, can be attracted and utilized their services. One can't expect development without a sustained and widespread kind of agriculture in a country or state.

Objective

In spite of many constants and limitations, agriculture is vital to the economic development of the state. Considering the marked importance of agriculture and its prospects for economic upliftment of the people of the state and attempt is made to study problems and prospects of agriculture in the state with the following objectives.

- a. to examine rural economic scenario of the state.
- b. to assess Land available for agriculture and water issues.
- c. to examine the trend of agriculture practice, productivity and production.
- d. to assess cost of production, prices of agriculture produce, profitability and availability and access to credit.

Hypothesis

- i) A large number of surplus rural workers who are engaged in agriculture with low marginal productivity and low level of income.
- ii) Over time the cost of production is increasing continuously not commensurate with the returns, thus making agriculture a non-profitable enterprise.

Methodology

An ideal approach to a study of this type involves a systematic and quantitative examination of the historical materials. Thus while probing the basic questions, the following general approach have been adopted. In the first place, the situation relating to all the aspects as in 1951 has been examined carefully having the secondary data. Then attempts have been made to analyse the agricultural practice at different points of time during 1951 and 2008. Statistical data relating to the present study have been represented at relevant places for empirical examinations. But in the absence of dependable and exhaustive time-series data, recourse has to be taken to adjusting the available data as and when necessary. For this, secondary data collected from Agricultural census, population census, Economic Census, Periodical reports published by

the Directorate of Economics and statistics, etc. are extensively used. In addition, primary data collected by carrying out field survey have been presented for micro level analysis. A detailed Cultivators Questionnaire was used to collect relevant information from the sample farmers of valley districts on cost of inputs, use of new technology, productivity, profitability, marketing of their products. On the basis of the requirement of the primary data, purposive sampling technique was adopted. Since there was no satisfactory sampling frame for the purpose, this method was used. This was done after a preliminary survey of the localities of the valley districts by the researcher to locate the localities engaging in agriculture extensively. In the process though representative samples are not drawn strictly on the basis of the scientific sampling method, it is believed that a wide coverage of villages will be able to generate a stable estimate. As a result 57 localities/leikai were selected from Imphal East, 43 from Imphal West, 45 from Thoubal and 30 from Bishnupur respectively. Collectively therefore, 301 respondents from Imphal East, 335 respondents Imphal West, 326 respondents from Thoubal, 178 respondents from Bishnupur District were contacted which altogether make up 1140 respondents for the study.

Discussion

It is observed from the present study that agriculture in the state is in a backward condition and still carried out as a subsistence activity by engaging a large surplus workers with insignificant contribution to production. In spite of a large number of workers and fertile land, agriculture of the state cannot supply rice, which is the only main product, for the population of the state. Thus, the state has been importing a huge quantity of rice everyday from other states at high transport cost. Poor farmers, on the other hand, are not willing to stay on land as agriculture is not remunerative. Rich Land owners are also not ready to invest on land as it is not profitable. Some land owners are willing to sell their paddy field, if the price of land is attractive, and invest to some other alternative activities. Under the circumstances, every year, many plots of our paddy field have been encroached for non-agricultural activities viz. establishment of schools and colleges, oil pump, brick fields etc. If this trend continues for some more time, the state will face a serious food crisis in the near future. In fact food security of the people of the state is threatened. The state needs a proper agricultural planning at grass root level with farmers' representatives. If a planner, who is from a faraway place and unaware of the differences in the input requirements, prescribes uniform inputs for all plots of land actual output will fall sorts of

its potential resulting in a heavy loss for the farmers. Therefore, policy makers, scientists and farmers should join hands and take up various measures to improve agriculture in the state. The state government should prepare a blue print for farm growth and make agriculture a profitable profession, so, that unemployed and under-employed rural labour force can be utilized productivity.

Rural Population

According to 1961 census, the total population of the state was 7,80,037, of which 712,320 i.e. 91.32 percent was in rural areas (Table-1) It is also observed from the same table that though the proportion of rural population has come down moderately over the census years, there has been a considerable increase in the absolute number of people living in rural areas i.e. 17,17,928 in the year 2001, constituting 74.89 percent of the total population. Since in-migration is not significant in the villages the growth of population is slower as compared to the urban area. Density of population per sq. km. according to 2001 census was 77 in rural, while for the state it was 103. Number of female per 1000 males in rural areas decreased from 1018 in 1961 to 963 in 2001, but in urban area it increased from 985 in 1961 to 1009 in 2001.

Table No. 1

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN OF MANIPUR, DURING 1961-2001.

| Census Year | Rural | Urban | Total |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| 1961 | 712320 (91.32) | 67717 (8.68) | 780037 (100.00) |
| 1971 | 931261 (86.81) | 141492 (13.19) | 1072753 (100.00) |
| 1981 | 1045493 (73.58) | 375460 (26.42) | 1420593 (100.00) |
| 1991 | 1331504 (72.48) | 505645 (27.52) | 1837149 (100.00) |
| 2001 | 1717928 (74.89) | 575968 (25.11) | 22,93,896 (100.00) |

Source: Different Census reports.

N.B. Figure of 2001 includes estimated figure of three hill Sub-Divisions of Senapati District viz Mao-Maram, Pao-mata and Pural.

Villagers are relatively more homogeneous on social and economic characteristics. Custom, tradition and religion play a prominent role in rural life. Occupational and social mobility of the rural people is limited. Poverty level is very high in rural areas, 40.03 per cent of people were below the poverty line during 1999-2000.^[1] The people affected by poverty are mainly landless agricultural workers. Low levels of income and inequalities in the distribution of income are very appealing in rural areas and it is more critical in the rural areas of the hill districts.

The number of villages in the hill is more, compared to that of valley of Manipur. As per 2001 census the total number of inhabited villages in Manipur were 2391, of which 1901 villages were in the Hill and 490 villages, in the Valley (Table No. 2).

Table No. 2

DISTRICT-WISE INHABITED VILLAGES IN MANIPUR

During 1971 to 2001

| District | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| Senapati | 404 | 447 | 517 | 625 |
| Tamenglong | 184 | 190 | 194 | 171 |
| Churchandpur | 362 | 428 | 502 | 546 |
| Chandel | 217 | 254 | 292 | 361 |
| Ukhrul | 216 | 221 | 222 | 198 |
| Imphal (E) | 252 | 220 | 206 | 204 |
| Imphal (W) | 146 | 125 | 117 | 134 |
| Bishnupur | 58 | 47 | 45 | 49 |
| Thoubal | 110 | 103 | 87 | 103 |
| Total Hill | 1383 | 1540 | 1727 | 1901 |
| | (70.96) | (75.68) | (79.15) | (79.50) |

| | | | | |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total Valley | 566 | 495 | 455 | 490 |
| | (29.04) | (24.32) | (20.85) | (20.50) |
| Total Manipur | 1949 | 2035 | 2182 | 2391 |

Source : Government of Manipur, Directorate of Statistics and Economics, Statistical Abstract 2005, P. 10, Imphal, 2006.

It is also observed from the same table that 1949 villages i.e. 70.96 per cent in Manipur was in the hill in 1971 which increased to 79.50 per cent in 2001. But in the valley it is observed that number of villages decreased from 29.04 per cent in 1971 to 20.50 per cent in 2001.

Occupational structure

In rural society, the predominant occupations are cultivation and agricultural labour. The number of workers engaged in non-agricultural pursuits is very small. Thus, agriculture is the mainstay of the people in rural area. Table No. 3 shows the distribution of rural workers under different sectors i.e. Agriculture or primary, Secondary or Industrial sector and Tertiary or service sector.

Table No. 3

DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL WORKERS UNDER DIFFERENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES DURING 1961 TO 2001

| Census year | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary | Total |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
| 1961 | 236354 (71.55) | 68337 (20.68) | 25660 (7.77) | 330351 (100.00) |
| 1971 | 256801 (77.05) | 33693 (10.11) | 42794 (12.84) | 333288 (100.00) |
| 1981 | 353556 (77.80) | 47733 (10.53) | 52921 (11.67) | 453210 (100.00) |
| 1991 | 430061 (77.39) | 42074 (7.57) | 83592 (15.04) | 555727 (100.00) |
| 2001 | 443126 (61.28) | 67886 (9.39) | 212075 (29.33) | 723087 (100.00) |

Sources : Different Census reports, Govt. of India.

Note : Figures in Parenthesis indicate percentage.

It is observed from the analysis of Table No. 3 that even after the completion of 50 years of economic planning, occupational structure of the rural economy of the State has not shown any appreciable change. The backwardness of rural economy is still evident from its structural rigidity accompanied by unemployment and under-employment leading to low productivity of workers and low level of living in rural areas. When rural work force increased from 3,30,351, in 1961, to 5,55,727 in 1991, the number of workers in non-agricultural sectors was only 22.61 per cent in 1991. This indicates that agricultural activities had to make room for the remaining 77.39 percent of rural work force. But this sector happens to be in a very unsatisfactory state. In spite of a large number of labour force engaged in agriculture, we are not self-sufficient in a number of agricultural products, and therefore importing almost all agricultural products, including rice, for domestic consumption. Thus, prevalence of chronic under-employment or disguised-unemployment in rural sector can be ascertained in Manipur. The cause of such surplus workers and low productivity is the result of various factors. However, poor infrastructure and lack of development in industrial sector were responsible to a great extent. Thus the crucial problem in rural areas is the lack of employment opportunities in non-farm sectors and inability of the backward agriculture to absorb workers productively.

Therefore, proper employment planning in the state needs a careful attention of the policy makers. Unless, the pace of development both in agricultural and industrial sphere is accelerated it will not be possible to provide gainful employment to the increasing labour force in the rural areas. Surplus workers due to natural growth of population may not find proper place in other sectors and will have to join agriculture. Only when agro based industries and non-farm activities are strengthened surplus workers can be withdrawn from agriculture. It is also observed from Table No. 3 that number of workers engaged in agriculture or primary sector during 1971 to 1991 was not less than 77.00 per cent of the total rural workers. But in 2001, all of a sudden, it reduced to 61.28 per cent. It is an emerging trend after economic reforms in India and need to examine carefully since the sequence of structural changes to accompany economic development is not observed.

In the process of economic growth of developed countries there has been a shift of workers from primary to secondary and then to service sector. The change was associated with economic development of these countries. For a meaningful change in occupational structure, there must be simultaneous development of all economic activities i.e. agriculture, industry and service sector. But, in the case of Manipur we hardly see any progress in secondary or industrial sector. This sector could observed only 7.57 per cent in 1991 and 9.39 per cent in 2001 of the total rural work force (Table No. 3).

It is also observed from the same table that there was a sharp increase of workers in tertiary sector, which was 15.04 per cent in 1991 to 29.33 per cent in 2001. The transference of workers from agriculture to service sector was not associated with the expansion of agriculture and industry which is one of the generally accepted pre-conditions for a sustained economic growth of a country or state. It is a fact that during the last few years a good number of rural youths have joined retail trade and other services. It is evident from the coming up of electronic equipment shops, apparel shops, PCOs, chicken centres, pan shops etc. in rural and urban areas. Almost all items of trade are imported from other states of India or foreign countries in formally. In the absence of our own production these economic activities may be halted in the long run.

Nature and Dimensions of Rural Unemployment

Rural unemployment is essentially seasonal in character, and it is more acute during the slack reason. In fact, there are some cultivators who have enough landholdings to keep them busy throughout the year. They overworked during sowing and harvesting season and call in even hired labour by giving high wages. But, most of the villagers have not adequate holdings to keep them busy, and they seek work wherever it might be available. The nature of unemployment of this population is not that it is acutely unemployed or underemployed during the slack season, but that it is employed irregularly, inadequately and unemployed intermittently throughout the year.

Over and above there are a large number of educated unemployed youths, in rural areas, who are seeking jobs in other occupations because they have no place in agriculture. According to live Register of Employment Exchange, Government of Manipur, total number of rural

educated unemployed youths, of different levels of education, was 4,79,272 as on March 2011 (Table No. 4). They are looking for Government jobs which is very limited in number. If agriculture and industrial sectors are remunerative and more productive, unemployed youths will not wait for Government jobs. No nation or country has moved from chronic economic stagnation into the takeoff stage of economic growth without raising agricultural productivity. It is one of the pre-conditions which must be strengthened or established before a sustained economic growth becomes possible. It is also very important to co-ordinate agriculture and industry. The relationship between agriculture and industry should be properly established, and should not be separated in the process of development planning. They are the two wheels of an economy. It is, therefore, necessary that the people and the policy makers devote more time to consider how best agriculture and industry contribute to each other and to study the interdependence between the two sectors. The Khansari Sugar Factory which was established in 1973 at Khangbok in Thoubal District as a public sector undertaking could not function due to the lack of co-ordination-between agriculture and industry in the state. (Personal interview)

Table No. 4**District Educated Unemployment in the Rural Area of Manipur as on March, 2011**

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Imphal West | 1,11,028 | 36,891 | 1,47,919 |
| Imphal East | 42,578 | 27,503 | 70,081 |
| Senapati | 37,055 | 14,147 | 51,202 |
| Chandel | 17,354 | 8,037 | 25,391 |
| Ukhrul | 19,174 | 8,346 | 27,520 |
| Churachandpur | 32,492 | 9,451 | 41,943 |
| Tamenglong | 16,032 | 5,071 | 21,103 |
| Thoubal | 46,490 | 17,748 | 64,238 |
| Bishnupur | 28,156 | 1,719 | 29,875 |
| Total | 3,50,359 | 1,28,913 | 4,79,272 |

Source : Govt. of Manipur, Directorate of Employment Exchange, Imphal, 2011.

Agriculture

Agricultural growth of a sustained and widespread kind is a precondition of rural development. After the Green Revolution was launched in India in the late 1960's, significant increase in production of foodgrain was achieved. India's food production is a success story following the Green Revolution. It has helped Indian economy in every direction of her economic progress. But, its impact is not satisfactory in the case of Manipur, except excessive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, etc, causing health hazards like hypertension, respiratory illness etc. Productivity of workers and land could not increase as expected. Due to low productivity many workers are ready to leave agriculture if they could find an alternative job. It is also a fact that some land owners are willing to sell their paddy fields, if the price of land is attractive, and invest to some other alternative activities. Under the circumstances many plots of our paddy fields have been encroached for nonagricultural activities viz, establishment of schools and colleges, oil pumps, brick fields, offices etc. If this trend continues for some more time, the state will face a serious food crisis in the near future. This trend can be checked only when agriculture is properly developed and made remunerative. Mere imposition of land policy may not serve the purpose.

Development of agriculture is the only means to increase purchasing power of rural mass and expand market for industrial goods. Thus it will help to bring about needed changes in state's economic organisation. Agricultural planning needs planning at grass root level and participation of local people for optimum output. If a planner, who is from a faraway place and unaware of the differences in the input requirements, prescribes uniform inputs for all plots of land actual output will fall sort of its potential resulting in a heavy loss for the farmers. Policy makers, scientists and farmers should join hands and take up various measures to improve agriculture in the state. Agriculture needs adequate irrigation facilities, consolidation of small holding, better seeds, fertilizers, credit facilities etc. Among others irrigation has a strong bearing on development of agriculture. Importance of water harvesting and management is known to everybody but no competent person cares for it. It may be mentioned that fertilizer, tractor, pump set, HYV seeds etc. are ready-made inputs which are available in the market, but water is not. Deficiency of water at the time of sowing and grain formation stage is the ubiquitous factor affecting crop

yields. There have been many years during which farmers could not get income equal to the amount they invested in agriculture.

Many major, medium and multi-purpose irrigation projects have been introduced in Manipur from the 4th Five Year Plan period onwards but benefit of these projects is hardly seen. Irrigation programme which was started with a small plan investment of Rs. 1.41 crores during the fourth plan has been increased to the order of Rs. 20.00 crores, Rs. 40.00 crores, Rs. 74.00 crores and Rs. 125.00 crores during the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th plan respectively. During the Ninth plan the outlay for major and medium irrigation was Rs. 220.00 crores. And the proposed outlay during the Tenth plan was Rs. 414.57 crores.^[2] In spite of the huge investment and efforts made by the Government farmers are facing acute water crisis for agriculture.

In rural areas of Manipur every house has a pond as a source of water for domestic uses. It is the most traditional and by far the simplest and the cheapest source of water which can harvest and store water for many months during a year. Thus pond water is for everything in rural life. However, in paddy fields we hardly see ponds for cultivation purposes. Farmers are simply waiting for uncertain rain water. They can not take up cultivation in time when there is late monsoon, and experienced bad crops in many years. According to a survey undertaken by Govt. of West Bengal, there were 10,89,876 lakhs ponds with a surface area of 7,23,785.23 acres in west Bengal in 1970-71.^[3] These ponds are the major source of water for cultivation. This simple practice may be introduced in our rural areas. One of the reasons for absence of ponds in our paddy fields may be small size of holding. A poor farmer with a small area of land is not willing to spare his land for a pond. On the other hand, land owners are from different places and cannot meet together for a collective programme. It is also a fact that there are a large number of rich urban land owners who hardly visit their paddy fields because their crop share is almost compulsory. If land owners are motivated through awareness programme many ponds could be constructed with traditional knowledge and skill. Once the problem of water is resolved we can expect a bountiful harvest. Now, who will initiate the project is the question. The state Government may take up awareness programme for the importance and benefit of pond water for micro irrigation. Different pockets may be located at different places for construction of ponds

and compensate the farmer who scarified the land in the form of regular income or an attractive price of the land.

Size of Holding

The state has a very limited arable land and majority of farmers have small and marginal land holdings. The area of operational holding is about 174 thousand hectares operated by 142 thousand farmers as per the agricultural census 1995-96. And the average size of operational holdings was 1.22 hectares in 1995-96.^[4]

Land utilisation records for the entire state are not available because the Hill areas are not cadastrally surveyed. As per land utilisation statistics of 2000-20001, the reporting area is about 1,90,446 hectares, of which 26, 900 hectares of land are not available for cultivation. Fallow land covers 200 hectares and other uncultivated land excluding the fallow land covers 8055 hectare of the total reporting area.^[5] Rice continues to dominate acreage of all crops accounting 68.66 per cent of the total cropped areas of the state in 2003-04.^[6]

Animal Husbandary

Animal husbandary is an integral part of the rural economy. Agriculture receives inputs from livestock and in turn provides feed for livestock. The main livestock available in rural areas of Manipur are cattle, buffalo, pig, goat, dog etc. Bullocks were used as the major motive power for agricultural activities. The traditional agriculture livestock farming system was self-reliant and sustained itself for thousands of years in rural Manipur. However, the system became increasingly unviable and un-sustainable because of low productivity. Rearing of pig and poultry is becoming important enterprises in rural areas. Poultry is the most efficient converter of feed into food fit for human consumption in the shortest possible time. Its demand in the market is also increasing due to increasing population. Thus many rural youths have joined this sector and employed themselves.

Table No. P (1)

Number of Poultry Farms in Manipur (Valley Area)

During the period of 1990-2010

| Year | No. of Big Farms | No. of Small Farms | Total |
|------|------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1990 | 21 | 470 | 491 |
| 1995 | 24 | 610 | 634 |
| 2000 | 27 | 1,050 | 1077 |
| 2005 | 38 | 1650 | 1680 |
| 2010 | 41 | 2300 | 2341 |

Number of persons engaged is about 2150 in 2010.

Big Farm = Above 1000 Chicks

Small Farm = 100 chicks

It is also seen from Table No. p(1) that number of farms have increased from 491 farms in 1990 to 2341 in 2010. Thus poultry business has become a profitable rural economic activity. Rural educated youths have started setting up of poultry farms instead of looking for uncertain government jobs.

Table No. P(2)

**Poultry Feed Imported From Other States Of India
In Manipur During The Period Of 1990-2010 (In Tones)**

| Year | Name of Feed | | | | | | | | | Total |
|------|--------------|-----------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| | Sona Feed | Samarat Feed | Amrit | Amricon | Smart | Amrit | Arambat | Lotus | Almon | |
| 1990 | 3950 | 5200 | 2400 | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil | 850 | 12400 |
| 1995 | 6500 | 7600 | 5650 | 500 | Nil | Nil | 650 | 750 | 2250 | 24200 |
| 2000 | 2700 | 13650 | 11550 | 5200 | 1750 | 1250 | 4550 | 1100 | 4550 | 46300 |
| 2005 | Nil | 21750 | 22600 | 8200 | 4700 | 8500 | 1500 | 2200 | Nil | 69450 |
| 2010 | Nil | 32500 | 35400 | 10500 | 6400 | 10400 | Nil | 300 | Nil | 95500 |

Source: Information collected from poultry feed Agencies of Manipur.

It can be seen from Table No. p-2 that most are imported from neighbouring state at high transport cost. However, poultry development still relies on the feed supplied by agricultural sector of other states. 1990=12,400, 2010=95,500 as such, its development cannot be isolated from agriculture.

Brick Industry

Brick manufacturing industry is one of the viable and flourishing industries in Manipur. It provides job opportunities to the rural poor, both male and female workers, for a considerable period of time during a year. After harvesting most of the rural workers remain unemployed as they have neither capital nor the experience to run their own business. It is also a fact that most of the women, as a tradition, hardly go far away places to find a job, but they readily accept to work at nearby places of their homestead. It is reported that a good number of rural female workers working in every brick firm of the state are able to supplement their family income. It is a great opportunity to rural poor workers of Manipur, where there is limited job opportunity. Since the brick firms start production, in full swing, during winter-slack season for agriculture in Manipur, rural workers can join and get non-farm job for about 5 to 6 months during a year. The prospect of brick industry in the state is also very bright due to increasing demand for housing, urbanization and other development projects. It is observed from Table No. B. that number of brick firms are increasing at a fast rate during 1980-2004 i.e. it was only 4 brick firms in the state in 1980, which increased to 63 brick firms in 2004.

Considering demand and supply conditions, brick industry is one of the successful industries in the state. Since brick manufacturing is a labour intensive enterprise rural workers can get job at remunerative wage, and earn regular income for a considerable period of time, during slack season. Thus, brick industry is playing an important role in the rural economy of the state. Rural workers, both male and female; educated and semi-educated, are willing to work at brick fields located in their villages. Thus, bricks firms are playing an important role in the rural economy of the state.

Table No. B/F**Growth of Brick Firms in Manipur****During 1980-2004**

| Year | TBF (TYPE) | SMBF (TYPE) | TOTAL |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1980 | 4 | Nil | 4 |
| 1984 | 8 | Nil | 8 |
| 1988 | 13 | Nil | 13 |
| 1990 | 14 | 1 | 15 |
| 1992 | 23 | 1 | 24 |
| 1994 | 21 | 5 | 26 |
| 1997 | 30 | 6 | 36 |
| 1998 | 34 | 8 | 42 |
| 2000 | 39 | 12 | 51 |
| 2002 | 39 | 20 | 59 |
| 2004 | 42 | 21 | 63 |
| | | | |

Source: Computed from primary data collected for the study.

TBF : Long Farm

SMBF : Long Farm

District wise workers engaged in Brick Fields of Manipur-2004

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Imphal East | 771 | 627 | 1398 |
| Imphal West | 704 | 802 | 1506 |
| Bishnupur | 313 | 231 | 544 |
| Thoubal | 743 | 683 | 1426 |

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Senapati | 45 | 29 | 74 |
| CC pur | 199 | 166 | 315 |
| Total | 2775 | 2488 | 5263 |

Soruce: Computed from Primary data collected from the study.

Horticulture

Manipur is uniquely placed with diverse agro-climatic conditions, fertile soil, sub-tropical climate with pockets of temperate zones and abundant rainfall which are favourable conditions for development of horticulture. However, horticultural activities in the state are largely confined to backyard farm activities, and are characterised by lack- of technical know-how, low level of productivity, improper post harvest management and poor marketing facilities. We need to tap the potential in a scientific and systematic manner to generate a sustainable level of income and employment for rural people. It is one of the most important economic activities of the rural areas, particularly in the hill which constitutes 90 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The major horticultural crops available in the state are banana, orange, pineapple, passion fruits, ginger, turmeric, potato etc.

The Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture which was launched by the Government of Manipur from 2001-2002, under the Prime Minister's special package programme will give an opportunity for the villagers to expand this sector productively. According to the survey conducted by Technology Mission 2005-2006, the total potential area for horticultural crops in the state was 2,77,064 hectares, of which 19.6 per cent was cultivated for horticultural crops.^[7]

Table

PROGRESS OF HORTICULTURE IN MANIPUR DURING 2000-01 TO 2005-06

| Crop | | 2000-01 | 2005-06 | |
|------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Area(Ha.) | Production(MT) | Area(Ha.) | Production(MT) |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| FRUITS | | | | |
| Banana | 1,440 | 11,520 | 2,214 | 22,201 |
| Orange | 930 | 3,720 | 1,848 | 14,800 |
| Pineapple | 9,990 | 69,930 | 11,872 | 97,516 |
| Passion Fruit | - | - | 3,870 | 42,926 |
| VEGETABLES | | | | |
| Tomato | 505 | 4,121 | 1,369 | 13,792 |
| Cabbage | 1,320 | 15,840 | 2,020 | 26,032 |
| Pea | 1,010 | 5,818 | 1,441 | 13,271 |
| SPICES | | | | |
| Ginger | 1,100 | 11,000 | 830 | 2,930 |
| Turmeric | 320 | 3,780 | 230 | 550 |

Source: Government of Manipur, Department of Horticulture and Soil conservation, Technology Mission, Annual Report, 2005-06.

It is observed from the above table that there is a good progress for expansion of horticulture in the state. Being a low chemical fertilizer consuming state, Manipur has a good opportunity to take up production of organic fruits for export and domestic consumption. With growing demand for organic products in domestic and international markets, the producers can fetch good price provided documentation and certification are properly furnished by the competent officials and scientists. Transportation and marketing bottlenecks should be removed through appropriate physical and extension education to enable the farmers to get maximum benefit.

Floriculture, another branch of horticulture which was considered to be simple garden activity to get flowers for religious offering and home decoration, has emerged as an important agri-business enterprise. This segment can be developed in rural areas where different species are available due to favourable climatic conditions.

Sericulture which has been in practice by way of exploiting her own indigenous flora and fauna in a traditional way is another sub-sector where many rural workers may be employed. It

being an agro-based enterprise can play an important role in shaping economic destiny of the rural people. This sector can provide employment at home for the entire members of the family by way of reeling, hand spinning of cocoons and shikworm rearing. As its activities do not involve hard labour children and old people can join conveniently. Because of its simple technology and low investment, it is suitable for a poor state like Manipur. In addition, development of sericulture will provide employment opportunity as supporting occupations like bamboo weaving for making rearing trays, manufacturing of chemicals reeling and twisting machinery, dye manufacturing etc.

Other Rural Economic Activities

Non-agricultural activity is an important part of rural economy. This sector is very important because of forward and backward production linkages. Agriculture needs implements and inputs that can be provided by rural non-agricultural activity. Handloom is the largest non-farm rural economic activity giving employment to a large number of rural women folk. Most of the weavers are self-employed artisans who are producing different cloths of local demand. Thus handloom has been playing a vital role in the rural economy of the state and the largest economic activity next to agriculture. Skill of weavers, mostly women, is not only a status symbol but also an indispensable aspect of socio-economic life of the people of Manipur.

There were 2.7 lakhs looms comprising of fly-shuttle, throw shuttle and loin- looms and 2.8 lakhs of weavers according to National Handloom census, 1987.^[8] Some of the peculiar products which are still in demand for local use are Ningthou Phee, Lamthang Khulak, Khaman-Chatpa, Moirang Phee, Leiroom, Hijamayek etc. Each design has its own history as to how and by whom they were invented. It is a fact that these products are not available in any other part of the country or world. Being a labour intensive family occupation, many family members can participate in pre-loom and post-loom process. Thus a large number of women weavers the numbers of weavers in handloom further increased to 4.5 lakhs, as recorded in the second handloom census 1995-96.^[9] However, number of weavers declined considerably to 204, 319 in 2009-10, according to the latest handloom census.^[10] Many factors have contributed to the present trend, declining number of weavers, in this sector. Cost of production is a very important issue. Since the weaves are working in unorganized and small scale, negotiation with raw

material suppliers is very weak, and any fluctuation in yarn price directly effects profitability. On the other hand, there is price competition with large scale mill made products in the market. Thus price differential leads weavers vulnerable in many ways. In the absence of support for accessing raw material and for improving infrastructure, handloom sector will not be able to join the race. The same trend of declining number of weaver could also be seen in the case of India, which declined by about 33% during the last 15 years^[11] are engaged in this sector even though remuneration or profit is not high.

Handicrafts industry is also another non-farm economic activity supporting rural economy of Manipur. Some of the products are embroidery, cane and bamboo, ivory, stone and wood carving, metal crafts, dolls and toys etc. Various products of Kouna (local name) has a district place of its own. One of the important problems associated with the craftsmen is that they are by and large poor and the methods and equipments used by them are also traditional and indigenous with low productive capacity. There is enough scope for giving regular employment if they are properly trained and the skills are properly harnessed.

Rural Administration and Development programmes

In the rural areas of Manipur, there are two types of local administration viz. Panchayati Raj system in the Valley and District Council in the Hill. Under the Panchayati Raj system, the local self-government in Manipur is organised at two levels - the village Panchayats and the Zila Parishads. In the Hill, the district Councils Act 1971 has been enforced since 1972. From August 1973 onwards, the act has been implemented in the hill by dividing the hill areas under six autonomous hill districts. Each district has a district council consisting of 16 elected members and two nominated members. The Manipur Hill People's Regulation, 1947 also provided for setting up of village authorities in each village. The members are nominated and consist of a chief of the village with his council of elders. The chief is virtually a sovereign and possesses the status and power of a king. Unfortunately, rural administration in Manipur both in the hill and the valley is not properly carried out due to power conflict between the local MLAs and rural representatives.

A number of rural development programmes have been planned and carried out in India from time to time right from the inception of community development programme in 1952. Implementation of rural development programmes is a success story in many states of India. However, in Manipur many programmes could not yield desired results due to power conflict between the panchayat representatives and the local MLAs. The attitude of the bureaucracy to monopolise and usurp power is another hurdle in the process of implementation of development programmes in the state. The danger of bureaucratic dominance is always there because of its alleged holding of technical knowledge. Moreover, officials are more routine oriented than vested with the spirit of public service.

The state have a sound village structure, but lack of people's participation in the process of development is one of the factors for poor performance of any programme. Awareness, willingness and capacity are the important factors on which participation depends. Maximum efforts are needed in the socioeconomic structure so as enable the villagers to gain the capacity to participate in the process of development. Adaptive response from the villagers are very important. People's participation implies participation at all the stages viz. planning, implementation, decision making, sharing benefit, monitoring and evaluation etc. People's participation is very important because villagers know their own needs and problems better than government officials working at block, district and state levels.

The 73rd constitutional Amendment Act 1992 provided for empowerment of women, weaker section, the poor and the disorganised in the society thereby paving the way for active participation of people in grass root democracy. Thus, the PRIs are the basic institutions of democracy where villagers could participate in the process of administration. The PRIs should be encouraged by the state government without interfering their functioning. PRIs should be encouraged to tap all internal resources instead of always depending upon government for funds. Above all maximum efforts should be made to elect the best candidates for Panchayat services. Concentration of political power in the hands of exclusive elite groups should be checked. This may lead to a cumulative inequal social structure resulting in the alienation of majority of villagers. Mere transfer of political power to village representatives will not solve rural problems. Villagers should be motivated to take part in the process of rural upliftment. Flow of

fund in the name of employment assurance scheme, wage employment programme etc. without proper planning will not improve rural economy. Mobilising money is not a problem, the real problem is how to structure the system. Before the funds are released it is important to find out where to work or what is to be produced. Distribution of fund to the beneficiaries without job opportunities will not serve the purpose of rural development programmes. Bharat Nirman of the UPA Government for rural infrastructure and Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) propagated by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, President of India, and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) are the new rural development programmes which will give a big push in rural economy of the country. The state government ought to take maximum care for implementation of these programmes or else the benefit may not reach to rural people. All roadblocks in effective functional transfer to village representatives should be removed.

Conclusion

It is observed from the above analysis that backwardness of rural economy of the state is a consequence of some factors which are basically rooted in inefficient rural administration, insufficient availability of natural and man-made resources relative to the needs of the villages, and their uneven distribution. Development of rural economy of Manipur, therefore, requires proper attention of policy makers, economists, and induction of more manmade resources including technology, their efficient utilisation as well as distribution in a manner that the required inputs accrues to the rural mass. This would manifest itself in making the self-employed more productive, and the creation of employment opportunities for landless rural workers. It is also observed that lack of people's participation in the process of development and rural administration is one of the hurdles of rural economic growth in the state. It is, therefore, necessary to improve awareness of rural people for various programmes and projects introduced by the central and state Governments through knowledge and physical connectivity so that villagers can take part in the process of rural development. Agriculture has an important role to play in the process of rural development. However, agriculture has remained a weak link in her economic structure. A.W. Lewis has observed in this connection that "failure of peasant - agriculture to increase its productivity has probably been the chief reason of holding down the expansion of industrial sector in most of under-developed countries."^[12]

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