

# Manipuri Language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. The languages of India belong to five families: the Indo-Aryan languages, the Dravidian languages, the Austro-Asiatic, the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman) and the Andamanese language. Language Policy of India is elucidated in the Constitution, implemented through various executive orders that have been issued from time to time and the judicial pronouncements since 1950. It deals with the use of languages in administration, education, judiciary, legislature, mass communication, etc., are pluralistic in its scope. It is both language-development oriented and language-survival oriented. The Eighth Schedule was included in the Constitution in 1950 and provides formal and Constitutional recognition to dominant regional languages in the spheres of administration, education, economy and social status (Sarangi, 2009: 27).

Manipuri language is one of the oldest languages in Southeast Asia, which has its own script and written literature. Manipuri language is the State official language of Manipur and it is also one of the 22 Eight Scheduled languages of India. It is the mother tongue of the Manipuris and the Manipuri Muslims. The movement for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution can be divided into two Phases. The First Phase Movement (1953- 1987), which deals with the movement that outbreak during the period for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Second Phase



Movement (1987-1992) deals with the movement that outbreak during the period for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

After more than four decades of struggled by Manipuris inhabitant in North- Eastern Regions and India in general and Manipuris inhabitant in Manipur and Assam particular in the different forms of struggles by sending and presenting of memorandum to the govt. officials, agitation, hunger strike, hunger strike unto death and band of Schedule languages organized by different non-governmental organizations like The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam, The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Tripura, Pan Manipuri Youth League, Imphal, All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), Manipuri Language Demand Co-ordinating Committee(MLDCC),N.E, All Assam Manipuri Students' Union(AAMSU), Assam and various political parties like Manipur People's Party, Janata Dal, Congress(s), National People's Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress(I) and Kuki Nationa Assembly. etc. As a result of all these effort of the Manipuris inhabitant in NER and India, Manipuri language was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1992, according to the 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution. In this article the Researcher tries to focus on Movement for the Inclusion of Manipuri language into the ES, the positions of Manipuri language after it was included in the ES and what are its present status and development are discussed here on the basis of historical facts and evidences of this language.



## 2. LANGUAGES OF INDIA:

The languages of India belong to five families: the Indo-Aryan (total- 19 languages, with a total population of 75.28%), the Dravidian (total-17 languages, with a total population of 22.53%), the Austro-Asiatic (total-14 languages, with a total population of 1.13%) and the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman) [total-62 languages with a total population of 0.97%]. The fifth family: Andamanese, is spoken by at most a few hundred among the indigenous tribal peoples in the Andaman Islands, and has no agreed upon connections with families outside them. Individual mother tongues in India number several hundred, according to the 1961 Census there are 1,652 languages in India. According to Census 2001 shows that there are in total 122 languages in India out of which 22 languages are spoken by over one million people, while a remaining 100 languages are spoken by more than 10,000 people. Then again, there are languages that are not even recorded because they are spoken by less than 10,000.

## 3. MANIPURI LANGUAGE:

Manipuri language (also called *Meeteilon*, *Meiteilon*, *Meiteiron*, and Meithei in Linguistic literature) is a direct descendent of the accumulation of Kuki Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Its synonym form *Meeteilon*, *Meiteilon*, *Meiteiron*, which etymologically means ‘language of the *Meeteis*(Manipuris)’. Manipuri language has its dialects consist of seven different clans namely Mangang (Ningthauja), Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang, Khaba-nganba, and Sarang-Leishangthem. Its script is known as Manipuri Script or *Meetei-Mayek*. Manipuri language is the only T.B (Tibeto-Burman) language in India with its own script – Meitei-Mayek, which has been in existence from 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. coins of Wura Konthouba (568-658)]. In



connection with Meitei Mayek, Dr Kriti (1980) writes-“ Meiteilon has been the state language of Manipur since 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., coins were struck, royal chronicles recorded, edicts and copper plates issued in this language.” (Devi Chanambam Sarajubala 2002:p.4). Ancient Meitei records were in Meitei-Mayek only. However, some of this rich heritage of Manipuri language was destroyed as a result of Hindunisation in 18<sup>th</sup> century; it has been influenced and enriched by Indo-Aryan languages of Sanskrit origin from 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards and by English language from 19<sup>th</sup> century respectively.

Manipuri language is the official language of the State of Manipur, India, which has its own script and written literature, its literature is very old with a rich and variegated history and traditions. In India, the total number of people who speaks Manipuri as their mother tongue numbers is 1,466,705 (Census of India, 2001). There are Manipuri speakers in Bangladesh and Myanmar as well. The Manipuri population was 6000 in Myanmar in 1931 and 92800 in Bangladesh in 1982 as reported in <http://www.ethnologue.com>. There are approximately 1.9 million speakers of Manipuri language, which used it as a lingua franca among the 29 different ethnic groups of Manipur. It also used among some ethnic groups in North Eastern India, who use it to communicate among themselves by using this language.

Manipuri language has been recognized by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, as the language of AIR, Imphal (1963) with coverage of 78% of the programmes and Silchar (1978). The language has been internationally recognized since 1762. (in the treaty between Gourashyam, the king of Meekly (Manipur) and East India Company), in Walter Hamilton’s Report on Manipur, 1820. It has been recognized as a subject of Modern Indian Languages of India (MIL) by CBSE, Board of Secondary Education, Assam, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Calcutta University, Calcutta,



Delhi University, Delhi and Assam University, Silchar. Manipuri language has been taught as a subject of MIL and Elective language up to the Graduate Level and as a MIL Language up to Post-graduate, M.phil and Ph.D., apart from being a medium of instruction up to High School Leaving Certificate (H.S.L.C) in Manipur, Assam and in the Manipuri dominated areas.

#### 4. LANGUAGE POLICY OF INDIA:

Language Policy of India is elucidated in the Constitution, implemented through various executive orders that have been issued from time to time and the judicial pronouncements since 1950. It deals with the use of languages in administration, education, judiciary, legislature, mass communication, etc., are pluralistic in its scope. It is both language-development oriented and language-survival oriented. All the provisions related to language can be found in Part Seventeen in Article 343-51 of the Indian Constitution. Article 343 declares that the official language of the Union would be Hindi in the Devanagari script. Article 345 permits the States and Union Territories to have their own official language that could be used for all official purposes of the States. (<http://www.Indian Multilingualism, Language Policy, p: 7>). The Policy is intended to encourage the citizens to use their mother tongue in certain delineated levels and domains through some gradual processes, but the stated goal of the policy is to help all languages to develop into fit vehicles of communication at their designated areas of use, irrespective of their nature or status like major, minor, or tribal languages. The policy is accommodative and ever-evolving, through mutual adjustment, consensus, and judicial processes. The accommodative spirit may be dim at times, and the decisions vacillating and uneasy, but this spirit was continuously prevalent from the early days of the struggle for independence from the British rule. This was seen as a necessity in



nation-building. Political awareness or consciousness relating to the maintenance of native languages has been very high, both among the political leadership and among the ordinary people who speak these languages.

#### 5. EIGHTH SCHEDULE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA:

The Eighth Schedule was included in the Constitution in 1950 and provides formal and Constitutional recognition to dominant regional languages in the spheres of administration, education, economy and social status (Sarangi, 2009: 27). In the beginning the ES listed 14 languages i.e. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu as the official languages of Indian States. Since then, this has been expanded thrice, once in the year 1967 to include Sindhi. For the Second time in the year 1992, according to the 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of India for the inclusion of Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Again for third time in the year 2003, according to the 100<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of India for the inclusion of Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Since 1950, when the time the Constitution of India introduced Language Policy of India and under that Policy 14 languages are recognized as the Eighth Schedule languages of India. However, The Constituent Assembly did not formulate any criteria for including particular language under the Eighth Schedule. But by analyzing certain criteria of the those 14 Eighth Schedule languages, we can assume the following criteria are necessary for Eighth Schedule languages. viz.

- (i) Literary tradition and Scripts of their own.
- (ii) Spoken by the largest number of people in large contiguous geographical zones as dominant languages of certain regions.



- (iii) Political concessions.
- (iv) Being recognized by States as official languages of the State.
- (v) Being recognized by Sahitya Akademi.
- (vi) Being spoken by more than one million people as their mother tongue.

## 6. MOVEMENT FOR THE INCLUSION OF MANIPURI LANGUAGE INTO THE EIGHTH SCHEDULE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA:

Movement for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India can be divided into two Phases. The First Phase Movement (1953- 1987) which deals with the movement that outbreak during the period for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Second Phase Movement (1987-1992) which deals with the movement that outbreak during the period for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

### 6. A. THE FIRST PHASE MOVEMENT (1953-1987):

The First Phase Movement (1953- 1987) for the inclusion of Manipuri Language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which deals with the movements that outbreaks during the period by various voluntary Organisations and Associations. In the year 1953, Manipur Constituency has taken a resolution for the recognition or inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution. This resolution has become the first demand for the recognition of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule and this demand was placed before the Central Govt. of India. Then in the year 1963, a special meeting of the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal (Estd.1935)



has taken a resolution for the recognition of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule and began to give pressure to the both State as well as Central Govt. for the same.

During this phase various voluntary Organisations and Associations from Manipur like (1)The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal (2)The All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), (3) The Naharol Sahitya Premi Samiti,(4)the Cultural Forum, (5) The Teachers' Forum, (6) The Universal Literary Association, (7) The Ipathaukok and (8) All India Youth Federation etc. All these organisations have taken the key roles for the recognition of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution.

In Assam also various voluntary Organisations and Associations like (1) The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam, (2) The All Assam Manipuri Students' Union, (3) The Thaugan Marup, Hailakandi, (4) The All Assam Manipuri Women Welfare Association, (5) The Naharol Khoriroi Sillup, Lakhipur, (6) The Progressive Youth Front, Lakhipur, (7) The All Assam Manipuri Youth Association, (8) Assam Pradesh Manipuri Youth Association, (9) Manipuri Literary Forum, (10) The All Assam Manipuri Association and (11) The All Manipuri Bhasha Parishad etc.

In Tripura also various voluntary Organisations and Associations like (1) The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Tripura, (2) The Manipuri Socio- Cultural Organisation, Agartala etc. In Meghalaya also The Meghalaya Manipuri Welfare Society, a non governmental organisation can be mentioned. All the Above organisations from Manipur, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya States etc. have played a great role and launched a series of democratic form of movements





by – Public meeting, Seminars and Demand Rally etc. for the recognition of Manipuri Language into the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution.

There is no denying fact that the political parties of Manipur have been spearheading in the venture for inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution. In the year 1965, the three political parties- (1) Congress Party, (2) Communist Party and (3) Socialist Party adopted spontaneous movement for the inclusion of Manipuri language by urging the Central Govt. of India.

In the year 1978, the movement for the inclusion of Manipuri language had overcome on a new chapter, when the movement was penetrated through the banner of the joint Movement of six (6) languages i.e. - Manipuri, Nepali, Kankani, Dogri, Meithili and Rajasthani. But such a joint movement had been creeping by six languages for several years without getting any considerable benefit from the Central Government of India. However, it left a stubborn impression in the history of Eighth Schedule Movement for the above languages.

#### 6. B. THE SECOND PHASE MOVEMENT (1987-1992):

The Second Phase Movement (1987-1992) for the inclusion Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution deals with the movement that outbreak during the period under the banner of Manipuri Language Demand Co-ordination Committee (MLDCC), N.E, a co-ordination committee formed by various Organisations and Associations from the North Eastern States. This Phase Movement is quite different from the First Phase Movement and under this Phase Various Manipuri



Organisations and Associations from NER unitedly organised the movement under MLDCC, N.E and able to give much pressure to the both State as well as Central Government of India. It is fact that the Co-Ordination Committee was formed under the sprit of the proceedings of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1987 in the premises of the Sanskriti Bhavan at Silchar was organised by Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam. The major constituents of the Co-ordination Committee were (1) The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, (2) The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam, (3)The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Tripura,(4) All Manipur Students' Union, Manipur, (5) The Manipur University Students' Union, Manipur, (6) The Cultural Forum, Manipur, (7) Tripura Manipuri Cultural Organisation, Tripura, (8) The Naharol Sahitya Premi, Imphal, (9) All Assam Manipuri Progressive Youth Association, Hojai, (10) All Mizoram Manipuri Association, Aizwal, (11) Meghalya Manipuri Welfare Association, Shillong etc.

From the First Phase Movement onwards, the political parties of Manipur have been spearheading in the venture for the inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution. Again in the year 1987, four political parties – (1) Congress (I) Party, (2) C.P.I, (3) C.P.M and (4) M.P.P also took vigorous role in this issue. In the later period the most tremendous roles have been triggered off by a joint political parties- (1) Manipur People's Party, (2) Janata Dal, (3) Congress(s), (4) National People's Party, (5) Bharatiya Janata Party, (6) Communist Party of India, (7) Communist Party of India (Marxist), (8) Congress(I) and Kuki Nationa Assembly.



After more than four decades of struggled by Manipuris inhabitant in North-Eastern Regions and India in general and Manipuris inhabitant in Manipur and Assam particular in the different forms of struggle by sending and presenting of memorandum to the Govt. officials, agitation, hunger strike, hunger strike unto death and band of Schedule languages organized by different non-governmental organizations like The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam, The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Tripura, Pan Manipuri Youth League, Imphal, All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), Manipuri Language Demand Co-ordinating Committee(MLDCC),NE, All Assam Manipuri Students' Union(AAMSU), Assam and various political parties like Manipur People's Party, Janata Dal, Congress(s), National People's Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress(I) and Kuki Nationa Assembly. etc. As a result of all these effort of the Manipuris inhabitant in NER and India, Manipuri language was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1992, according to the 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution.

#### 7. MANIPURI LANGUAGE IN THE EIGHTH SCHEDULE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA:

Manipuri language becomes one of the Eighth Schedule Languages of the Constitution of India on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1992. According to the 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of India Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali languages are included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

The following rights and beneficiaries can be availed by any of the Eighth Scheduled languages:



1. An M.P member belonging to any of the Eighth Schedule languages can speak and deliver his/her speech in own mother tongue.
2. An M.P member belonging to any of the Eighth Schedule languages can participate in Language Commission and Committee, according to the Article-344(1) of the Constitution.
3. Any of the Eighth Schedule languages can broadcast their language in AIR and T.V, Delhi.
4. UPSC for its Civil Services Examination allowed the candidates of the Eighth Schedule languages can give their answers in mother tongue.
5. For the development of Indian languages, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi established CIIL head quarter at Mysore and four other regional centres at Mysore, Pune, Patiyala, Bhubaneswar.
6. For the preparation of Syllabus and Teaching aid in National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi only Schedule languages can get opportunity.
7. Only the films of the Eighth Schedule language can participate in the National and International films award competition.
8. The States of Eighth Schedule languages can implement their language as compulsory subject in their own States.
9. Central government give one core of rupees to the States of the Eighth Schedule languages for the development of their language.
10. The States of the Eighth Schedule Language can establish Official language Department, Training Institutes and Translation Bureau offices in their own States.



11. According to the Three Language Formula one Schedule language can learn as third language in Central governmental schools and Navodaya Vidyalaya etc.
12. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education Department, Language Division, New Delhi give financial assistance to the Schedule language for the translation of their language into English and other different languages of India.

Though, the above rights and beneficiaries are given to those languages which are already included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. However, Manipuri language one among the Eighth Schedule languages of India is unable to get all the above facilities that given by Language Policy of India that mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The following rights and beneficiaries are still unable to get by Manipuri languages are as follows:

1. Till today not a single Minister, M.P and M.L.A member from Manipuri speaking community were not given permission to speak Manipuri language in the Legislative Assembly House and Parliament.
2. Except, members from the political backgrounds side, till today not a single members belong from the intellectual background are selected in the Official Language Commission of India.
3. The scripts of Manipuri language is not printed in the Indian Rupee.



4. Still Central as well as States government is not taking serious forward steps for the establishment of Directorate or Institute for the development of Manipuri language.

## 9. CONCLUSION:

The development of every language should be constitutionally guaranteed. However, apart from constitutional recognition, the utmost challenge is the creation of smooth socio-cultural ground where every language is properly nurtured. The Movement for inclusion of Manipuri language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution is justification. As a matter of justification Constitution of India also recognized Manipuri language as one of the Eighth Schedule language of the Indian Constitution on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1992 according to the 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Indian Constitution. Though, Manipuri language was recognized by the Constitution of India from 1992 onwards, but still it was unable to get all the rights and beneficiaries given by Constitution to the Eighth Schedule languages of India. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the both Central as well as State Government for development of Manipuri language. As compare to the status and development of the those languages, which has already included in Eighth Schedule, the status and development of Manipuri language need to be developed in many fields as mentioned in the above.

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