

MOTHER IN CHILD CARE VIZ A VIZ SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

Child rearing practices are ways in which children in a society are raised. Regardless of their cultural orientation, parents play a significant role in helping their children become honorable and contributing members of society. In Manipur women's role for the upliftment of the health hygiene for the youth the society are from all classes and casts. And we see that more number of women are coming up in this field, this will improve their social status and remove social problem also it will make them independent. Manipuri women's role in the socio-economic and cultural life of Manipur is significant. Manipuri women do not stay behind the veil. Manipuri women have always played a very vital and active role in social movements.

Keywords: Child rearing, Socio economic development, Manipuri women, Child care, Child development, Motherhood.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting or child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, financial, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Children first learn the values and attitudes practiced in their home environment, then from schools and peers. Child rearing practices are related to the child's upbringing but if you looked back child rearing practices you find very surprising scenario how the child had been treated. From the 1600s through the Victorian age, it was thought that "a child should be seen and not heard."ⁱ They accomplish this by nurturing their children, engaging in problem solving with them, and modeling by example of culturally acceptable ways of living and solving problems.ⁱⁱ The major needs and problems specific to women are related to the biological and psychosocial needs inherent in the process of growth, development and reproduction. The stages of this process are all very closely interrelated, each stage building on the one before and influencing the next; the growth and development of one generation affect the next generation.ⁱⁱⁱ For example, the events at birth are largely determined by the mother's previous health status. Certain stages in this

process are more critical, with great risks. Because of the special characteristics of the female reproductive process, women are, in health terms, considered vulnerable. This is to be noted that this area of reproduction, which is so specific to women health, cannot be looked at as a disease to be eradicated and the old disease-sickness models of medical services do not apply. It is the basis of human life.

CHILDHOOD

The nutritional and health equipments are the same in both the sexes; during infancy and childhood males and females require on a weight-for weight basis equal intakes of all nutrition's. However, cultural norms and attitudes to girl in Manipur society result in parents having a preference for boys. In addition, such sex preference has implications for a couple's decision concerning family size; couples who do not have a son are less willing to practice contraception.^{iv} And for operative sterilization females are force or volunteered for sterilization. The inequality in nutritional health attention during childhood, which may result from sex preference often, brings problems later in life. Without adequate supply of require correct nourishment the bones will not grow so long, strong or hard as they should; the pelvic bones will be smaller and may be deformed in shape, causing difficulties during child birth.

MATERNAL NUTRITION, LACTATION AND CHILD REARING

The women's nutritional requirements during pregnancy and lactation are considerable; in pregnancy there is mark increase of food supplements to cope the requirements. Malnutrition and anemia during pregnancy and lactation period are highly increasing due to socio-economic problems and also from the social systems like food taboos especially in the rural region.^v

Maternal malnutrition not only represents drain on the women herself, but also significantly increases the risk that the baby will have a low birth weight, which limits the infant's chance of survival and its potential for healthy growth and development. In the Manipur society the women continue their full work and activities during pregnancy until labor; and that after childbirth women tent to limit their duties for a short period of time only.^{vi} In addition there are also food taboos restricting in a few food habits resume the household work along with less time to take rest. It is the children of these women who have the lowest prospect of health future. The maternity and child health are closely related with the women status. The factors influencing the practice of breast-feeding are also the same. The interrelationship of infant and young children feeding and the status of women demonstrate the possible conflicts of women's role as mother with their other role in the production, handling, preparation and serving of food within the Manipur society. Which demand so much of their time and energy, and highlights the importance of attitudes and structural support related to the process of reproduction? The problems women

face in combining their reproductive role and their heavy domestic workload with their participation in economic activities outside the domestic sphere including that of social activist as Human Rights activist are cited as crucial for most women in Manipur .But, without changes in roles and attitudes, women will continue to face difficulties in carrying out their roles and achieving personal satisfaction and fulfillment as individual human beings and emphasize the need to focus on equity as a goal of development. They imply more than equality between women and men, and involve fundamental changes throughout society- in family, the community and national development strategies.

METHOD

It is an empirical and exploratory research based on secondary data. The secondary data collected from available literatures like reference books and journals. The selected women pioneers were interacted and noted down. And the data were also studied through different methods.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the normal procedure of child care by a mother in Manipur
- To understand mother's role in socio economic development besides their childrearing process.

MOTHERHOOD AND CHILD CARE

Manipuris are ahead of other Indian communities in terms of promoting and practicing equal rights for men and women. Literacy, by definition and in modern education system, may mean for someone to be able to attain school and be able to read or write. However, Manipuri life and social customs are a continuous process of learning which provides the very essence of existence in harmony. Below I furnish some of the reasons, in addition to those pointed out above, why Manipuri children have a better chance of living than the children of other Indian communities with equal or higher economical and educational facilities. The marriage system as well as prenatal and postnatal mother and childcare processes practiced by Manipuris are the reasons for having lower infant mortality rate (IMR).^{vii}

1. Freedom to choose and to be able to practice it is the highest form of democracy in any society. A Manipuri girl may pursue any profession she likes, and she can marry a lover of her own choice without any objection from their parents or others. This has two advantages: first, a woman (or a man) can't blame their parents or anybody for spousal differences or incompatibility, if any, found out later on, since it was their own choice; and secondly, love

has no boundary for caste and creed. Parents too can't demand dowry from either side, and expenses are more or less equally shared. A girl's parents and brothers may provide as much as or as little as they can afford to as gifts for their daughter or sister in marriage. Dowry and the caste system are the most dangerous elements for destroying human health and relationship, specially for women, among the Indian communities.^{viii} Manipuri society is distinct from other Indians in its social customs.

2. Once married, a pregnant woman is considered to attain the most beautiful stage of her life just like a flower in full bloom. This provides a woman the internal strength and moral uplifting, which are vital at this very tender stage of hers and the baby's life. During pregnancy, she is also assigned to light household chores and is prohibited from lifting heavy objects.
3. When a woman is in her 6-8th months of pregnancy, family members, friends and relatives will start organizing schedules for inviting her to their homes for special lunches or dinners. During such gatherings a first-time would-be mother is advised or taught childbirth lessons - what to expect, what signs to be checked for or when to inform elders for a delivery and so on. These are usually women's affairs. A better prepared woman has a minimal risk of going into shock and a maximal chance for a successful delivery. Before hospitals were established, still now in rural areas, childbirth is performed by Chabokpi Maibis (mid-wives or nurses). They are community nurses and are usually experienced elderly women who insist on maintaining sterile conditions during child delivery. They are very successful.
4. After a child is born, the mother and baby are limited to a designated area in the house, which is warm or can be heated by a fireplace (for example, in the winter nights temperature in Manipur can drop down to 2-4 degrees C and they do not have electric heaters). The mother and baby stay in this area for 14 days. During this period, the maternal grandmother or an aunt will come to assist the mother in taking care of the baby, giving bath, changing diapers, washing baby cloths, etc. Even though relatives and friends visit the mother and her new baby, except for a good glance at the baby, no one, besides the mother and the caretaker, is allowed to hold the baby. This practice ensures that the baby is well protected from germs and infections. The visitors bring special food items for the mother, who is now in a restricted and a strict diet program. Oily and spicy foods are forbidden.
5. All Manipuri mothers breast-feed their babies; therefore, a mother's diet includes a lot of fluid intake and various types of soups containing herbs and vegetables, and fresh fishes provide protein sources. Mother's milk contains all required nutrients for the child and maternal antibodies to protect the baby from diseases. The child needs nothing other than mother's milk at least up to 6 months until the Chak-Umba or Rice-Eating ceremony in which the baby test solid food for the first time. A practice of shared breast-feeding observed in Manipuri society is an exciting and an interesting process. Sometimes a mother takes a

few days to start lactating, i.e. to begin to produce breast milk. At this period a wet-mother (or a wet-nurse), who herself is breast-feeding her own child, will volunteer to feed the newborn for a few days. This practice of sharing of motherhood ensures a better chance for survival of every child born in the community during the earliest period of his or her life. Nowadays, formula substitutes are available and are widely used; however, in remote areas the above method of sharing of motherhood had been the most effective method.

6. The chances that a child will reach adulthood also depend on various social factors especially in rural areas where medical facilities and medicines are not readily available. Manipuri maibas (or medicine men) have an in dept knowledge of various medicinal plants, herbs and local animals. Some of the traditional methods of treatment are very effective against certain illnesses. The first three years of a child's life are the most fragile period since the body immune system (body defence mechanism against diseases) is not yet strong enough. Apart from the medicinal practices, social customs and ceremonies associated at various stages of development in a baby's life are also important. Four main stages of child development and ceremonies associated with them practiced in Manipur are briefly described.^{ix} (i) Manipuris celebrate the birth of a child on the 6th day, a "Baby-Shower or a Welcome Ceremony" called "Epan Thaba" (Swasti-Puja or Ming-Thonba or naming of the child). Friends and relatives are invited; gifts are presented along with laining-laishon, meaning pujas. (ii) Next, parents and grandparents look forward to the day of Chak-Inba or Chak-Uma (rice-eating ceremony) in which the baby tastes solid food for the first time. Till now the baby had been living strictly on mother's milk or on a liquid diet. This too is a social gathering with Laining-Laison, and a feast for everybody. (iii) When the baby is about 3 years old, "Nahutpa or ear-ring ceremony" is performed with great festivity. This is performed both for boys and girls. I would presume that at this stage boys and girls think alike and that a boy can't tolerate a special ceremony for girls alone even though he removes his earrings a few years later when he starts schooling. This is a gala festival for the child because at this age he or she enjoys a special attention awarded to them. (iv) When a child is ready to attend school (4-5 years of age), he/she is about to mingle with people outside his home away from parents and is starting a new adventure in life. "Mangol-Peeba or a blessing ceremony" is performed. Family and neighborhood elders are invited to bestow upon blessings on the child. The child bows his head in front of grandparents, parents and elders, and each person blesses the child Mangol (wisdom) and Punshi-Nungsang (longevity or full life). In this way, the life of a Manipuri child is celebrated and taken cared of by the whole community.^x Above all, "Ningol Chakouba" festival, in which women who were married to distant places come to her parents house along with the children for a sumptuous feast and get-together (more or less similar to Thanksgiving in the US), helps to maintain the family ties forever. These functions bring a continuous attention and safeguard to the child while growing up in a

hostile environment. It takes a village to raise a child - is a favorite phrase of Mrs. Hillary Clinton, the First Lady of the United States of America. Manipuri society is a good example.

Although Manipuri custom ensures a better chance for the survival of its children, the educational level of Manipuris is still low. At this electronic age of super highways, no longer Manipuris are isolated in the hills and plains of Manipur or in the valleys of Burma, Silchar, Guwahati and so on. The world is wide open for anyone to explore and opportunities to pursue. Higher education, while preserving the tradition, will insure a smooth and successful adaptation for all Manipuris to social changes carried with time, and to lead a successful life wherever they decide to live. Education empowers a person to choose profession, to gain respect from others, to strive for a brighter future and to bring up his/her child to a healthy adulthood.

MOTHER IN SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Manipur has witnessed the successful role of collective women's power in the past and also in the present day. This is something, which we can celebrate. However despite their major contributions in the socio-economic and political life of the state, they are not given their due position in society. Thus there is a mismatch between women's role and status. This is indeed a matter of great concern, which we all need to ponder over.

Manipuri women's role in the socio-economic and cultural life of Manipur is significant. Manipuri women do not stay behind the veil. They also do all the buying and selling of goods in the market. Women dominate the markets in the rural and urban areas. Their unique role in the market will be known if one visits Ima Keithel (Khwairamband Bazar) at the heart of Imphal. They are greatly involved in the agricultural related activities. They are artistic and creative which they prove in the field of handloom and handicrafts and dance. Their dominance in the field of sports not only in the national level but also in the international level is remarkable. One significant observation that we find today in Manipur is the rise in the number of women entrepreneurs and women self help groups. The numbers of workingwomen in different sectors are increasing.

Manipuri women have always played a very vital and active role in social movements. The role of women in these movements can be traced back to the pre British Period when Manipur was under monarchical system. But women's social movements emerged in an organized manner from the early part of the 20th century. One was in 1904, which was popularly known as the first Nupilan (women's agitation). It was against the unjust British administration. Because of their high spirit struggle, many administrative reforms were then made, and women leaders emerged in Manipuri's traditionally male-dominated sphere of business, trade and commerce. The second was the Nupilan of 1939. It was a spontaneous eruption of the suppressed energy of the exploited

people. The main cause of the movement was directly related to the irregularities and malpractices in the administration of the state and the economic exploitation by the authority. In the agitation some of the women leaders and along with their sympathisers were sent to jail. All the womenfolk expressed their deep concern over the matter. They stopped business in the market and the Khwairamband Bazar remained devastated for three years. Ultimately they succeeded in bringing reforms in administration. The outbreak of women agitation was a turning point in the emergence of new trend of political and national consciousness in the state.

CONCLUSION

Manipur women have thus contributed immensely in the socio-economic transformation and upliftment of the society. The above glaring instances of collective women's power in Manipur - Nupilan, Meirapaibi and Marup movements will surely make a reader believe, that womenfolk in Manipur are accorded high status. But unfortunately the reality is somewhat the other way round. The society is still in the womb of the patriarchal system. Women have no much say in the decision making process. Their representations both in the secondary and tertiary sectors are quite minimal. The preference of male child is still prevalent. There are certain rituals where women's involvements are considered profane and restricted their participation. Women produce children; they are mothers and wives; they do the cooking, mending, sewing and washing; they take care of men and are subordinate to male authority; they are largely excluded from high status occupations and from positions of power. In terms of the reward of prestige, wealth and power attached to gender role, women almost invariably come off worst. There is a need to change the attitude of the society in general and men in particular. It is high time that we respect and reflect on the contributions of women not only in the socio-economic sphere but also in the fields of cultural, political and sports. Women of Manipur deserve a higher status, for the development of any society the status of women is a key factor determining progress.

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