Chapter 1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social change refers to any modification in the social organization of a society in any of its social institutions or patterns of roles. It is a complex, multi-faceted, all time and universal process. Sometimes it is sudden, though often it is gradual. However, the wheel of the social change cannot be stopped. Some societies accepted social change easily while some show rigidness in acceptance. The patterns and factors of social change vary from time to time and situation to situation which can be shown in terms of the elements of time and history in relation to a given society or social phenomenon. A scientific enquiry into the specific Lois of Manipur reveals patterns of social change in the present study. This chapter of the study therefore deals with the formulation of the reserch problem, the research methodology and the organization of the study.

The Research Problem

Social change is a universal phenomenon which is experienced by every society but it differs in terms of history and structure of a society. It varies in terms of its forms, rate and factors in a given situation. Hence, a subject of investigation among the social scientists. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1953) define social change as "whatever may happen in the course of time to the roles, the institutions, or the orders comprising a social structure, their emergence, growth and decline". According to them, society is a complex network of patterns of relationships in which all members participate in varying degree. These relationship changes and behaviors change at the same time. Individuals are traced with new situations to which they must respond. For Morris Ginsberg (1958), social change means change in the social structure, i.e., the size of the society, the composition or balance of its parts or type of its organization. According to Maclaver and Page (1949), "By social change is meant changes in the social relationships..... the changing ways in which human beings relate to one another". Ronald Edari (1976) defines social change in two things: (i) the change in the constitution of social entities over time, and (ii) the change in the relations among entities over time (Vago 1980:7-9). In the middle of the 19th century, two great waves of change were sweeping across Europe; namely, industrialization and the expansion of democracy and human rights in the wake of the American and

French revolutions. The concept of social change becomes one of the central problems of Sociology, and August Comte and other thinkers tried to explain cause and course of social change in terms of social evolution and revolution. According to August Comte (1839), societies progressed through a series of predictable stages based on the development of human knowledge, and constitution of new system cannot take place before the destruction of old or before the potentialities of the old mental order have been exhausted. Herbert Spencer (1859) offered a theory of social change known as evolutionary theory which is more comprehensive than that of August Comte based on empirical data of population growth and structural differentiation. According to him, change is a movement from an indefinite, unstable homogeneity to a definite, stable heterogeneity. For Max Weber the concept of change is related to Ideology. In his book "Protestant Ethic and the Sprit of Capitalism" (1958), Weber maintained that Calvinism made possible the emergence of capitalism by providing people in western societies with a new "this-worldly" orientation. He further said that in focusing their attention on such values as individualism, hard working, and frugality, it paved the way for a major restructuring of economic life. However, Karl Marx's concept of social change is different. For him, the most significant social changes are revolutionary in nature and are brought about by the struggle for supremacy between economic classes. He said that the continuing development of the productive forces in every historical stage changes the relationship between the classes and the condition of the conflict and in due course hitherto dominated class is able to overthrow the existing mode of struggle and system of relationship for establishing a new social order (Vago 1980:46-74). The American Sociologist Neil J. Smelser (1959), in an empirical study of social change on the Industrial Revolution, analyzed the interrelationship between the growth and organization of the cotton industry and the structure of the family during the industrialization process in the 19th century in England. Danial Bell's "Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism" (1970) gives an interesting turn to the conflict perspective by suggesting that changes in the modern world arise out of the tension between three 'realms' of social reality which operates on different principles and moves towards different goals such as the techno-economic structure, political system and culture.

In India, the process of social change has been studied and analyzed by different scholars, using different concepts and approaches. D.P. Mukherji (1958) and

A.R. Desai (1976) applied the Marxist approaches for understanding social transformation of Indian society. M.N. Srinivas's study on "Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India" (1952) is based on the cultural perspective of social change and made the outstanding impact on Indian Sociology. Yogendra Singh (1973) labels social change as 'Ideology' and presented a paradigm for an integrated approach to analyze social change in India. Also, I.P. Desai's study (1976) of untouchability in Gujarat analyses both the ideological and behavioural changes taking place on the pollution-purity matrix of interaction.

Manipur is one of the eight states in the northeastern region of India; the other states of the region are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikim and Tripura. Out of the state's total area of 22,327 sq.km. the fertile valley constitutes 1813 sq.km. in the centre, i.e., about one tenth of the whole area, whereas the rest (90%) of the area consists of the hills. The state historically emerged from a small clan principality at Kangla in the heart of Imphal into a powerful kingdom. Various ethnic groups have settled in Manipur such as Meiteis, Naga,Kukis, Lois, Yaithibis, Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslims), Mayangs and Nepalis. Among them, Meitei, Naga and Kuki are the major ethnic groups. The people in Manipur are settled in both the hills and the valley. The valley is predominantly inhabited by the Meitei and the hills by tribes whereas the Loi are settled in the valley bordering the hills.

The Lois are mainly the descendants of the Chakpas, who were an important racial group of Manipur. At one time they were independent and settlled at Kangla, the heart of Imphal valley. Once, Manipur valley was occupied by several tribes, out of which the principal tribes were seven, viz., (i) the Ningthouja or Meitei, (ii) the Angom, (iii) the Khumal, (iv) the Moirang, (v) the Luwang, (vi) the Sarang-Leishangthem and (vii) the Khaba-Nganba (Brown, 1975: 57; Hodson, 1909: 5-6). These tribes had their own principality and were independent of each other. A continuous struggle among these principalities to overpower one another was a common phenomenon until the emergence of the Ningthoujas or Meiteis as the supreme power. For one time the Khumal appeared to have been the most powerful and after its decline the Moirang became prominent. And ultimately the Ningthoujas or Meiteis under the kingship of Pakhangba (33-154 A.D) subdued the other tribes and the name Meitei has become applicable to all the tribes. However, Loi who were Chakpa in origin refused to merge with Meitei and remained as the Lois by paying tribute to the Meitei king. Hence, they were given the name *Loi* meaning **subdued**

and driven out from the Kangla. Thus, the people of the villages like Koutruk and Leimaram were known as the Loi because they refused to assimilate themselves with the Meiteis and became the Loi by paying tribute to the king. They continued to be Lois even after they ceased to pay tribute because they did not embraced Hinduism in the 18th century under the rule of the king Garibniwaza (1709-1748 A.D) who himself converted into Vaishnavism in 1717 A.D. Moreover, it is also a fact that the people other than those of the Chakpa origin have merged with the Lois. For instance, the persons who committed serious offences and those who were captured during the war were pushed to the Loi villages. Thus, the people of Khurkhul Loi village claim to be the descendents of Kabo. The period from 33 A.D to 1709 A.D has been seen a continuous establishment of Loi villages in Manipur. There are altogether 33 villages which have been historically recognized as Loi villages. These are Chakpa, Kha Sekmei, Awang Sekmei, Koutruk, Thongjao, Thoubaldong, Andro, Phayeng, Leimaram, Kakching, Sikhong, Ningel, Tinshang, Chairel, Loikok, Heiyel, Hangul, Phoubakchao, Waikhong, Thanga, Moirang, Kameng, Waikok, Khurkul, Khamaran Kekam, Kumbi Tolong, Wangoo, Nungoo, Sugnu, Langathel, Pallel and Kwatha. Of these 33 Loi villages, only eight Loi villages have been included in the list of scheduled castes in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Order Amendment Act, 1956 as they were socio-economically backward and their life style including food habits and customs were different from the Hindu Meiteis. These villages are: (i) Andro, (ii) Sekmai, (iii) Phayeng, (iv) Khurkhul, (v) Koutruk, (vi) Leimaram, (vii) Kwatha and (viii) Tairenpokpi. Of these eight Loi villages, the two Loi villages, namely, Koutruk and Leimaram are undertaken for the study in order to analyse the patterns and processes of socio-economic and cultural changes among the Lois of Manipur.

The Lois of Manipur are also undergoing discernible changes in the contemporary times. The post-Independence periodof India has made an impact on social, political and economic life of the Lois. Despite their steadfastness in their traditional beliefs and practices, they have now gone towards accepting much of the customs and traditions of the Hindu Meitei with a view to get wider acceptability from the neighbouring Meitei villages and to live in harmony with them. In some cases, even the services of the Brahmins are used for ceremonies and public feasts. In marriage, birth and death ceremonies some Lois have begun to imitate the Hindu Meiteis. People of the younger generation are freely mixing and eating with other

communities. Inter-marriages of the Lois with the Meiteis are also taking place to some extent. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj System in Manipur in 1960, Village Panchayats have been set up in the Loi villages. Although traditional caste council continues to exist, their power has reduced and they mainly look after the Lai-Haraoba of their respective villages. Also, a few educated persons have come forward to in instill a sense of unity among the Lois and they have set up an association known as 'All Manipur Loi Association' to forge group solidarity among them. Thus, like their counterpart Scheduled Castes in other parts of India the Lois of Manipur are also undergoing the discernible changes in economic, political, social, cultural, religious and ritual life in the contemporary times. This evokes interest for a scientific study of social change among the Lois of Manipur. Before procceding for investigation let the studies conducted on Scheduled Castes in India be reviewed.

Review of the Literature

There is found a huge number of studies on the Scheduled Castes in India after Independence. From the viewpoint of the present study these studies may be reviewed under the following three major classes:

I. Studies on the Scheduled Castes in India

II. Studies on the Scheduled Castes in Northeast India

III. Studies on the Scheduled Castes in Manipur

Under these classes the studies conducted on the Scheduled Castes in India are being taken up here for review.

I. *Studies on the Scheduled Castes in India*

The studies under this class are related to change in social, cultural, educational, economic and political dimensions of Scheduled Castes. Therefore, the studies of this class are reviewed under these dimensions.

(i) Social Change

Traditionally the Scheduled Castes occupied the lowest position in the social hierarchy. They were considered as untouchables and were kept away from the higher castes. However, a number of studies conducted on the Scheduled Castes reveal that the social gap between Scheduled Castes and higher castes appears to be bridging. The Scheduled Castes have changed their pattern of behaviour and got more closely associated with the higher caste people who have been their class mates. Also, there is a breakthrough from the ascriptive traditional roles, as new roles and status are being achieved. Thus, they are apparently less identifiable as a separate segment in the

present society. These studies have been conducted in the various regions of India; namely, Manipur, Karnataka, Nainital, Hardoi, Damapur, Varanasi, Taminadu, Andra Pradesh, Mysore, Kerala, Maharastra and Uttar Pradesh (Devi 2002; Singh 2002; Singh 2001; Bhatt 2000; Singh 1997; Pandey 1996; Dahiwale 1994; Singh 1990; Chaudhary 1987; Pundir 1987; Sisodia 1987; Sabnis and Mahurkar 1985; Prajapati 1982; Dubey and Mathur 1972; Satish 1970; Singh 1969; Harper 1968; Lynch 1968; Aiyappan 1966; Patwardhan 1966; Silversten 1963; Cohn 1955).

L. Bino Devi (2002) in her book "Lois of Manipur: Andro, Khurkhul, Phayeng, Sekmai" deals with the Lois of Manipur with special reference to the socio-economic aspect of the community. She finds that Lois who were kept isolated in the past and maintain their distinct practice in matters of religious affairs have now changed due to the influence of Hinduism and there is free mixing, constant interaction between Lois and Hindu Meiteis. However, economically they are backward as a huge majority of them is living below the poverty line. She has given some of the factors responsible for it as bad communication system, use of undeveloped agricultural methods, lack of trading centre, marketing facility for industrial products and unemployment. She further said that social discrimination on community basis in the Meitei society is likely to fade away in the near future as these people are gradually entering into the general Meitei mainstream and the social development.

Prabhatchandra Singh (2002) who studied the Lois of Koutruk observed that with the process of social change, development of means of transport and communication, growth of literacy etc., the Lois of Manipur no longer need to be conscious of any stigma of being low caste people, and they get a due place in the society without being subjected to any kind of discrimination.

N. Indramani Singh (2001) argued that Lois who were earlier distillers of country liquor for consumption on various occasions have abandoned the distilling and consuming it in order to qualify for admission into the Hindu society. Most of them have been converted into Hinduism and upgraded to the same status as that of the formerly high class Meitei.

In the book "Social Movements in India" edited by M.S.A.Rao (2000), Chandrashekhar Bhatt writes on the reform movement among the Waddars of Karnataka. The Waddars believed that their low social status was due to their dietary habits and age old customs and ritual practices. Therefore, they tried to reform their

eating habits, initiated their women to wear bangles and blouses and tried to acquire the ritual services of a Brahmin priest in religious ceremonies. Thus, various reforms were made not only to bring changes in their dietary habits and dress but also in their traditional customs and practices.

Magoljao Singh (1997) conducted a study on the Loi people of Tairenpokpi and observed that the Loi of Tairenpokpi were subjected to social discrimination. This village has remained as a village of outcast, low and subdued, distanced by the Meitei society for a long time. Their outlook in almost every field remains conservative. Economic backwardness and illiteracy of the people of Tairenpokpi largely affect the political consciousness and development programmes of the village.

In the article "Mobility and Perception of Socio-economic Status among the Tribal and Caste Groups", Janak Pandey (1996) talks about the perception of social status, economic conditions and relative poverty among the socio-economically mobile and immobile groups belonging to three different segments of the Hindu society- Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and upper castes. For Pandey, the respondents' perception of economic condition and physical quality of living were significantly affected by their membership in the caste groups. The caste and mobility interaction were significant for perceived economic condition and relative poverty. He argued that the immobile upper caste respondents perceived their social status as higher than did their counterparts in the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste groups. Moreover, the perception of the status of, both, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups did not improve with socio- economic mobility.

S. M. Dahiwale (1994) studied the role of scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste elites of Kolhapur. He found that in addition to the problems of weaker sections such as civil rights of untouchables, implementation of reservation policy and organization of marginal landholders, the upper caste elites were engaged in the eradication of superstitions, socio-political enlightenment of the masses, making people aware of their social and national responsibilities and economic and educational policies of the government and combating communalism.

Borbabu Singh (1990) studied a Loi village, Phayeng, in Manipur. According to him, these people are treated as Scheduled Caste and backward class in the amendment Act of 1956. However, now a day, they feel that they are living in an open system of society. Their society has adopted the general customs and is having very close social and political relations with the general caste people in Manipur. But

regarding their religion, they are still observing the original extra items of ritual performance.

Vandana Chaudhary (1987), in her study "Social Mobility among the Scheduled Castes in Hardoi", found that Valmikis and Chamars of this town have improved their status in education. They are adopting new occupations and have entered in white collar jobs using social opportunities and becoming politically more conscious and active. They appear to adopt patterns of life and behavior of the higher castes. Thus, there is a breakthrough from the ascriptive traditional roles as the new roles and statuses are being achieved.

M. Sisodia (1987) also finds that in Tarai village in Nainital district, there is a trend of urbanization and westernization in the style of housing, furniture, dress pattern in the present generation of Scheduled Castes in comparison to the previous generation. The mobilized families are giving more importance to higher education and better economic conditions as these bring greater prestige, more social relationship with higher castes and more political consciousness and participation.

Sabnis, B.K and Mahurkar, P.R (1985) in the study of "Relationship between Education and Social Status of the Scheduled Caste Students from Beed District" found that economic conditions have improved as a result of education. Most of them are employed in government services and felt that their social status has improved because of education and is steadily improving further.

Prajapati (1982) while discussing the impact of education on social, economic and political changes among the scheduled castes in Damapur sub – division argued that education could not loosen the caste ties, and the Scheduled Castes are in favour of continuance of the caste system because of the advantages which they are getting from the reservation policy. Although they had been leaning towards the inter-caste marriages, they were not willing to marry their girls to caste Hindu boys. After Independence, with the spread of education they have grown up politically and prefer high salary jobs irrespective of power, status and respectability. Thus, they regarded economic advantages as more important than others.

In the article "Positive Discrimination Policy and Ethnocentric Attitudes among the Scheduled Castes" (1979), S.N. Dubey reveals that when the higher and the lower castes of India live together in mixed housing colonies, their attitudes toward each other seem to be affected in different directions. As the high caste people

tend to become less ethnocentric toward the lower castes while the lower caste people tend to developed prejudices against the higher caste.

Dubey and Mathur (1972) discussed the public policy provision for formulating ameliorative programmes for the Scheduled Castes. He pointed out the anomalies in the administrative structures which are responsible for the implementation of such programmes. They insist that the state should intensify its efforts to offer greater educational opportunities to these communities and the welfare workers must create an awareness of their rights and an atmosphere for assertion by reporting cases of infringement.

For Satish Saberwal (1970) universal adult franchise, reservation of seats and posts for Scheduled Castes, abolition of untouchability and constitutional provision, undermine the legitimacy of traditional status distinctions and thus promise the lower castes a status equal to that of the traditionally high caste. In his study of two scheduled caste groups; namely Balmiki and Ad Dharmi in Punjab, he finds that belief in inherited pollution has considerably weakened during the last two decades. A number of factors enabled the Harijans to proclaim their rise in the status publicly. With the help of reservation policies, they get special facilities in schools and colleges and educated persons get jobs in government posts. Many Harijans have now become full members of high status networks. Thus, according to him, in an industrial society with its high differential role structures, rewards have to be paid to a variety of skills and achievements.

T. R. Singh (1969) in a full study of the social structure and change among the Madigas who are a Scheduled Caste in Andhra Pradesh found that Madigas have sanskritized their ways. They no longer eat carrion or tan hides. They are not refused admission to schools, nor are they prohibited from drawing water from the public wells. He has also noted that while the social distance between high castes and Madigas has narrowed down, the gulf between them and other Scheduled Castes has increased. They are now seeking their alliance with the higher castes.

O.M. Lynch (1968) studied the Jatava caste of Agra who was the leather workers and found that as an untouchable caste they were segregated occupationally and residentially, occupying the low lying areas of the city. However, they were making strenuous efforts at social climbing since the beginning of the 20th century. Some of them got contracts for stone cutting, construction work, supply of hides and skins and scavenging. Also, the advent of shoe industry added a significant dimension

to change their situation. They have formed committee for bringing about social reform in their community, resolved to ban the eating of beef and buffaloes and began to wear the sacred thread. After Independence and promulgation of the Constitution, the Jatavas were trying to avail opportunities to capture political power through their numerical strength.

A. Aiyappan (1966) in his study of Mayura Kerala village has described the changing status of the Scheduled Castes with special reference to the Iravas. According to him, the Iravas began an agitation to abolish distance pollution as far back as in 1911 and, a decade later, they started an agitation for temple entry. Now a day, no member of a superior caste can order a member of the lower caste to go off the road to avoid being polluted by the latter. The taboos against the untouchables have disappeared. The Iravas are now set on the road to progress. They are now getting education and are growing cash crops which give them more money.

S. Patwardhan (1966) has made a study of the process of sanskritization at work among the several scheduled caste groups in Maharashtra such as the Chamar, Dhor, Mahar, Mang, Holar, Mang – Garudi. She has noted that how the Holar who were very low in the hierarchy of the Scheduled Castes have been able to raise their social status to the level of Chamar. She has also brought out the fact that conversion to Buddhism did not alter the condition of the Mahar materially as the stigma of untouchability lingered on.

D. Silversten (1963) noted radical change in the status of the untouchables in the Tanjore district due to various campaigns carried out by the workers of all political parties, backed by welfare programmes of the administration. He further mentions that caste ideology is being weakened. The Brahmins are losing their economic control over the lower castes. On the other hand, untouchables have given up poultry keeping which helps to keep their houses and environment clean. They have joined a union of cultivators to fight for their rights against the landlords. Other castes in the union have conceded their claims to equal status. The union makes its power felt through petitions, strikes and boycotts. Thus, their alliance with other backward classes has helped them to improve their social and economic status.

B. S. Cohn's study of Madhopur village in Uttar Pradesh (1955) contains an interesting and vivid account of the changing status of the Chamars. The Chamars of this village seek to raise their status by adopting some of the practices of orthodox Brahmins. A large number of Chamars now belong to the *Shiv Narayan* sect. Their

children are now sitting side by side with high caste children in the village's primary school. Their caste panchayat has become more active in preserving their collective good name and constantly verbalize a desire for more education to raise their status. Thus, social gap of the Scheduled Castes is bridging with the upper castes in various parts of India. This is the result of special constitutional and statutory provisions and various programmes which have been implemented after Independence of India.

(ii) Cultural Change

In the cultural sphere, the scheduled caste people have changed their pattern of behaviour, life styles, and dresses in the way of the high caste people. They reformed their eating habits, initiated their women to wear bangles and blouses and tried to acquire the ritual services of a Brahmin priest. Thus, change is taking place in their material culture and behavioural patterns. Studies stretching from 1950s to the turn of the present century, conducted in the regions like South India, Mysore and Manipur have indicated this trend of change in the Scheduled Castes (Singh 2001; Balakrishnan 1993; Harper 1968; Alexander 1968; Beteille 1967).

Nabakumar (2001), in his paper "Cultural Heritage of Leimaram", says that the Loi people of Leimaram village, who in the past followed their traditional customs and practices, have now experienced a vigorous process of acculturation. They have sanskritised their traditional customs and practices owing to voluntary acceptance of Vaishnavism and are engaging a Brahmin priest to officiate their ritual and religious ceremonies.

Balakrishnan (1993) indicates that the economic conditions among the Christians of Kerala, who are of the scheduled caste origin, were much the same as those among the scheduled caste Hindus. However, the educational profile of the former was somewhat better than that of the latter. In his study, the economic aspects of commonality of experience were documented with empirical evidence, showing that the Christian converts of scheduled caste origin were much the same as their non-convert brethren. Finally, the author concludes that while their common dalithood has to be the meeting point, its basis has to be searched for equality and dignity that was the cause of their conversion to Christianity.

E. B. Harper (1968) in his study of the untouchable Holeru caste in the Shimoga district of Mysore (now Karnataka) found that these people are trying to gain prestige by assuming a behavioural pattern associated with higher caste taboo on beef-eating and refusal to perform such tasks as are ritually degrading. He further said

that these people did not reject the idea of hierarchy in society; they dispute their low position in it; they are adopting high caste behaviour patterns and their main ambition is to achieve a higher place on the social ladder.

K.C. Alexander (1968) reports on the changes among the Pulaya Harijans of Kerala who were formerly slaves and placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and are now changing their religious rituals and pattern of living such as adopting Sanskritic gods, offering them with fruits and sweets instead of blood or toddy, changing behavioural patterns, mode of dress and common eating and drinking. He also argued that these people are now giving maximum attention to education and neatness. Moreover, there have been cases of marriage between Pulayas and high castes. Thus, the example of the Pulaya shows that it is possible for a former untouchable caste to improve its position and be accepted as equal by the higher castes.

Andre Beiteille (1967) has analyzed how the British rule released the Scheduled Castes from the grip of traditional sanctions. He argues that the modern secular social order provides alternative symbols of prestige and values. This paves the way for westernization which comes to be adopted as a means of acquiring status and education and acts as the solvent of the barriers between various communities. He further says that the Scheduled Castes are now learning more and more to make increasing use of political action to bargain for a better position in society. Beiteille (1966) details the relationship between the Brahmin, the non-Brahmin and the untouchable castes of Paraiya and Palla. He argued that education enables the untouchables to compete with the Brahmins on equal terms for white collar jobs. It is also found that of the two untouchable castes, the Palla consider themselves as socially superior to the other and they have adopted a number of Sanskritic practices.

Thus, the cultural changes could mainly take place in the environment of individual freedom and equality, special provisions of protection of weaker sections and spread of education among the Scheduled Castes.

(iii) Educational Change

Among the Scheduled Castes the rise of literacy is perceptible after Independence. They are giving more and more attention to education because they have experienced that education gives an impetus for occupational and social climbing. When they are examined in terms of income, the greater they realized the importance of education in the interest of their community as well as their own life.

However, the educational status of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls is lower than that of the boys of these categories, due to the poverty, ignorance and illiteracy of the parents. Also, the benefits of massive adult education programmes are not equitably shared among the Scheduled Castes as poverty stands in their way and forces their younger children to become bread earners by participation in the labour force or by doing odd jobs. Therefore, special policy measures are required to improve educational status of these people. Studies conducted during the last two decades of the 20th century in the regions like Manipur, Kumaon, Allahabad, Nainital, Uttar Pradesh, Faizabad and Varanasi have brought out the evidence of the educational changes among the Scheduled Castes in India (Betty 2000; Chanana 1993; Viswanath 1993; Maurya 1991; Pandey 1988; Kamlesh 1987; Chouhan 1975).

Betty Salam (2000) in her study of "Socio-Cultural and Educational Status of the Loi People of Sekmai" reported that social customs of the people of Sekmai differ from the traditional Meitei system. The society remains aloof from the influence of Hinduism. They have tried not to mix up with the influence of Vaishnavism that was adopted by the Meiteis during the 18th century. At present, they have started giving first priority to educating their children because they have realized the necessity of education for advancement of the village and progress of their own life.

Karuna Chanana (1993) focused on the growth of higher education within the framework of preferential treatment and supportive measures for the benefits of different social groups; namely, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, minorities and women. She reveals educational policy discourse which assigns several functions to higher education such as equity for scheduled castes and tribes; mainstreaming the minorities and equality for the women. She also demonstrates the failures of educational policy to integrate these functions which remain sectoral aims even at the conceptual level. She further argued that in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Indian society, the parameters of gender, caste, class and region are crucial in determining access to higher education and gender becomes the all inclusive negative parameter conferring cumulative and competing disadvantages on women. Thus, the educational policies and programmes are unable to encompass the complex social reality within a single framework and to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

In her study of "Social Mobility among the Scheduled Caste Women in India-A Study of Kerala", Leela Viswanath (1993) argued that traditionally the Scheduled Castes were more or less homogeneous caste groups. They were at a low position

educationally and occupationally. However, recent socio-political changes have enabled them to pursue education to the extent they wish. There were also governmental efforts to uplift and help them to have new choices and opportunities in the occupational field. Moreover, as a result of modernization, education and occupational opportunities, there are greater opportunities of social mobility among the scheduled caste women.

Saroj Pandey (1993) discussed the status of education among the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls in Orissa. According to her, the government took some major steps after Independence to improve educational status of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students such as granting scholarships etc, which attracted these children to school. However, the educational status of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls is much lower than the educational status of the boys of these categories. She also said that there is low enrolment and high drop-out of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls in schools due to the poor infrastructural and physical facilities in the schools, besides the traditional outlook and attitudes of parents towards girls' education, poverty, ignorance and illiteracy of parents and secondary status of girls in the family. Therefore, it is suggested that all educational programmes for girls should not only be vocation-oriented but that they should be based on the Gandhian principle of "Earn while you learn", otherwise, they may not get the desired result.

R.L. Maurya (1991) notes progressive trends in economic and educational status of the Scheduled Castes in Kumaon region by taking protective and promotive measures together. But on the stigma of untouchables and other social disabilities, these measures have had hardly any significant and noticeable impact. Economic and educational advancements are of little help in eliminating the stigma of inferiority of caste.

Pandey (1988) observed that importance to the higher education for the achievement of better and fair jobs is given by the scheduled caste students belonging to the lower educational backgrounds while those belonging to the highly educational and professionally qualified backgrounds give importance to education in removing the drawbacks of the community and improvement of the socio-economic status in the society.

Kamlesh (1987), in his study of "Social Mobility among Chamars and Bhangis in Shergarhi" observed that out of three generations, the second generation of scheduled caste women is receiving education and occupation and this contributes to

the educational and occupational mobility of the family. However, education of males contributes to the all round mobilization of the family. And the order of mobilization both vertical and horizontal appears to be in education and then in occupation.

Chauhan (1975) reveals that the role of education is very crucial so far as the Scheduled Castes and their development is concerned. Among the scheduled caste communities, education is supposed to lead to upward social mobility and positive change in a modern technological society and other means like political and economic power have proved to be failure as compared to education.

Thus, educational attainments infused occupational mobility, competitiveness and political awarness among the Scheduled Castes.

(iv) Economic Change

In the economic dimension, the Scheduled Castes have become less dependent on the higher land owning castes for their livelihood. They have now become landowners, cultivators and sharecroppers because of the new legislation on land holding. Urbanization, industrialization, modern education and various development programmes of the government have caused change in their traditional occupations. The educated few are getting white collar jobs in the public and private sectors. Others who are still doing their traditional occupations are trying to develop their skills by using new technology and methods. Thus, change in economic dimension is now reflecting in the patterns of living, housing, social celebrations and relationships with other castes. These studies mostly cover the period from 1970s to 1990s and were conducted in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Kumaon region, Nainital, Beed district, Damapur, Tamilnadu and Delhi (Karade 2009; Rajalaxmi 1996; Sivaram 1989; Census organization 1969).

In his book "Occupational Mobility among the Scheduled Castes", Jagan Karade (2009) discusses the educational achievement and occupational mobility among the Scheduled Castes in India and shows that the second generation of the Scheduled Castes is highly mobile as compared to their father's generation. It also attempts to measure the impact of Inclusive Policy provided by the government of India. The author found that Mahars were converted to Buddhism under the leadership of Ambedkar because of the fact that Buddhist community is more aware about the occupational development as compared to other communities. Hence, the development of the Buddhist could be treated as an ideal model for all the backward classes in India.

Rajalamxi Rath (1996) examines the impact of the policy of compensatory discrimination and various constitutional provisions aimed at giving preferential treatment to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Bihar, especially with regard to the jobs in the public services. She finds that the beneficiaries of the reservation have not only broken away from their traditional occupations but have also become examples for their power, prestige and self- confidence. Also, induction into the government services has given a fillip to these communities to contribute actively in the development process.

P. Sivaram (1989) in his study of "Social Mobility- A Sociological Study" found that urbanization, industrialization, modern education, migration and other factors have given rise to changes in the traditional occupations of the backward castes. He reveals that occupational mobility is high among Padmasalis and least among Chakalis. Thus, it is possible for the lower caste people to change their occupations and achieve upward mobility.

According to the census organization (1969), there is a great deal of occupational mobility among the Mallah who were traditionally a community of boatmen in Delhi. The Mallah have given up their traditional occupations and are employed as agricultural labourers, peons and watermen in government establishment. Some of them maintain tea and vegetable stalls in the city while others are fully engaged in selling milk or working as gardeners.

Thus, the scheduled castes have significantly emerged in various occupations as a result of educational acheivements and development programmes under government's protective policies.

(v) Political Change

Politically the scheduled caste people are now learning more and more to make an increasing use of political power to gain better position in the society. The policies and programmes of the government also played an important role in enhancing the social positions of the Scheduled Castes. The special provisions have been made in the constitution to safeguard the backward classes and Scheduled Castes. In accordance with the provisions, reservations made in government services and special welfare programmess have been taken up to improve their social status. In western Uttar Pradesh, there is an increasing qualitative and quantitative participation of the Scheduled Castes in the political and decision making process. They are also forming their caste organizations for occupational mobilization. However, in some

other parts of India such as in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the Scheduled Castes could not achieve positions in the rural power structure, and if they got it through reservation of seats they are unable to make any impact on the decision making process, which may be due to their low social status and low level of literacy. Besides, they are not able to improve their standard of living which is due to the fact that the benefits of reservation policy are being taken away by other groups of the backward and forward castes, leaving the conditions of the former untouchables unaltered. Unequal development and change among the Scheduled Castes has been revealed in Assam, western and eastern Uttar Pradesh, Meerut, Karnataka, Bihar, Kolhapur in the studies conducted during the period from 1970s to 1990s (Thorat 2009; Singh 1995; Chaudhary and Pratima Chaudhary 1994; Pundir 1993; Upadhaya 1992; Uplaonkar 1992; Chauhan 1992; Bhatt 1975).

Sukhadeo Thorat (2009) in his book "Dalits in India: Search for a Common Destiny" argued that notwithstanding some gains made in the past 50 years or so, the disparities between scheduled castes and other sections of Indian society continue with the Scheduled Castes lagging behind with respect to a number of development related indices. He reveals that the cumulative impact of disparities in market, non-market transaction, education, health, housing and political participation is reflected in the high levels of poverty in the scheduled castes and there is still a long way to go before scheduled castes can attain some degree of respectability, a dignified life and sustainable livelihood. He also suggested that the gap between Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Castes can be reduced by strengthening and expanding the current policy of empowerment and equal opportunity.

K.S. Singh (1995) writes about the Scheduled Caste community of Assam known as Brittial Bania in his book "Scheduled Castes". According to him these people are mainly concentrated in the Barpeta and Nalbari districts of Assam and their main occupation is to make gold and silver ornaments. The economically poor families have taken to rickshaw and cart pulling while others are employed as daily wage labourers. There are only a few white collar job holders. Their literacy rate compares unfavourably with the neighboring communities because children participate in their traditional occupation. However, they are forming a modern caste association for community welfare and development activities.

S. N. Chaudhary and Pratima Chaudhary (1994) analyzed the changing rural power structure in the post-Independence era and its implications for the Scheduled

Castes in Bihar. According to the authors, introduction of a democratic political set up and abolition of the Zamindari system provided a number of facilities to the deprived and the oppressed in order to achieve equality. Further, decentralization of political power upto the grassroots levels and introduction of different development schemes prepared the ground for transfer of sources of rural power from traditional dominant groups to emerging segments. The authors feel that future of the majority of the poor dalits can be secured only when all concerned are able to launch a comprehensive struggle.

J.K Pundir (1993) in a study of western Uttar Pradesh village finds an increasing qualitative and quantitative participation of the Chamar in the decision making processes. Their self-confidence and efficiency have increased in the political and other developmental processes.

However, Arun Kumar Upadhyaya (1992) in his study of scheduled caste leaders in rural setting in eastern Uttar Pradesh finds that despite their numerical preponderance, these people do not achieve position in the rural power structure. Furthermore, though they have got position of members in the Panchayat through reservation of seats they are unable to make any impact on the decision making process. Besides, they have low social status, low income, low level of literacy and less exposure to mass media leading to lack of their assertion and mobility.

Uplaonkar (1992) has discussed social legislation regarding the Scheduled Castes and its misuse and manipulation with special reference to Karnataka. It is argued that the benefits of reservation are being taken away by other groups from backward and forward castes, leaving the condition of the formerly untouchables unaltered. This is due to imprecise and ambiguous use of the phrase 'Scheduled Castes' in the constitution. It is not specifically spelt out that the term 'Scheduled Castes' stands for the untouchables, although the criterion for a caste to be listed as such is mainly segregating untouchability.

Anita Chauhan (1992) who conducted a study of leadership among Scheduled Castes in Meerut finds that the Scheduled Castes are forming organizations based on traditional pattern like caste organizations for their occupational mobilization and they are also achieving positions in the statutory panchayats. Their numerical strength also adds to the rise in their political participation at the local level. Their skills in leather work get translated into entrepreneurship in producing specialty leather items. The

provisions of state policies are better used when they have their organization for self-employment.

Anil Bhatt (1975), in his book "Caste, Class and Politics", has analyzed how low status caste people have been able to acquire political position and raise their socio-economic conditions and how the special provisions made in the Indian Constitution have safeguarded the backward castes and Scheduled Castes. In accordance with this policy, reservations have been made in government services and seats are reserved in the parliament and state legislatures. Besides, the government has taken up special welfare programmes for overall development of depressed sections of the society through the five-year plans which are helping improve their social status.

Thus, by availing of universal franchise, reservation of seats in political institutions and protection of law, the participation of Scheduled Castes has increased political decision making.

Briefly, changes are perceived in social, cultural, educational, political and economic aspects of Scheduled Castes in India. Sanskritization is the process of change witnessed in socio- cultural aspects whereas changes in education, occupation, economic development and political awareness are mostly induced by law and state agencies through welfare and protective measures taken up for their uplift.

II. *Studies on Scheduled Castes in Northeast India*

The studies under this section focus on change in social, cultural, political and educational dimensions of the Scheduled Castes in North east India.

The Scheduled Castes in Northeast, considered in the past as inferior, low and untouchables, have changed their status like that of the formerly high caste Hindus. The studies show that they have got upgraded to the same status as that of high caste people by adopting behaviour patterns, life styles, dress and housing patterns of the high caste people and they engage Brahmin priest to officiate their ritual and religious ceremonies. They no longer suffer from any stigma of being low caste people. Educationally, the scheduled caste people have started giving first priority to educating their children as they realized the necessity of education for the advancement of their society and progress of their own life. Study conducted in Manipur has shown it. The studies conducted in the last decade of the 20th century in the states of Assam and Manipur have clearly brought out the social change (Devi 2002; Singh 2002, 2001, Salam 2000; Singh 1990).

In the political dimension, the scheduled caste people are forming modern caste associations for community welfare and development activities as they realized that through political participation and exercising political power, they would gain their due place in the society. However, sometimes, their economic backwardness and illiteracy affects their political consciousness and development programmes. Therefore, for effective political participation, they have to be provided with better economic conditions and education. Studies conducted in Assam and Manipur in 1990s have demonstrated these changes (Singh 1997, 1995).

Briefly, the Scheduled Castes of the North-East India have improved their life in social, political, cultural and educational aspects due to Sanskritization, modernization and education.

III. *Studies on Scheduled Castes in Manipur*

The studies on Scheduled Castes in Manipur indicate changes in social, cultural and educational dimensions of Scheduled Castes in the State. The studies have come up in the last two decades.

Socially, the Scheduled castes of Manipur are apparently less identifiable as a separate segment in the present society. In many villages, they seem to have changed their behavioural patterns, life styles, dress and housing on the way of the upper caste people. They no longer suffer from any stigma of being low caste people in the Manipuri society and find their due place without being subjected to any kind of discrimination. They have sanskritized their traditional customs and practices, owing to their voluntary acceptance of Vaishnavism and religious ceremonies. This has been corroborated by the study conducted in the last decade in Leimaram village in Manipur. Among the Scheduled castes, education is used as means of socio-economic improvement. The study of scheduled castes observed that majority of them who are belonging to the lower educational backgrounds accept the importance of higher education for the achievement of better and fair jobs and improvement of their socio-economic status. The study conducted in the last decade in Sekmai village has demonstrated it. However, this trend of social change is not observed in case of a few isolated villages, perhaps, due to illiteracy and little contact with the mainstream. The trend has been brought about by the studies conducted in the state during the last two decades (Singh 2002, 2001, Salam 2000; Singh 1997, 1990).

Briefly, socio- cultural and educational changes in the Scheduled Castes of Manipur are mainly taking place through Sanskritization and Westernization.

In sum, social change among Scheduled Castes is occurring in all aspects; namely, social, cultural, educational, political and economic. Yet, it is inequitably distributed among the Scheduled Castes in various regions, and also it could not completely bridge their gap with the higher caste groups. In the Northeast, particularly in Manipur, the gap between Scheduled Castes and high castes seems to be bridging fast and at a greater scale. Sanskritization and modernization are the two important processes working among the Scheduled Castes in Northeast India in general and Manipur in particular. But politicization is an additional process actively working among the Scheduled castes, particularly in the rest of India. Now, among the Scheduled castes, industries and new methods of agricultural technology are available; diversification of occupations has occurred; use of modern technology in traditional occupation to develop as small enterprise has grown, education is increasing and opportunities to organize themselves are being used. The state legislation for various policies and programmes for their development acts as concomitant accelerating factors for bringing social mobility and change among them. Also, their numerical strength acts as a tool to achieve political power in the community power structure and decision making process. Where such factors are lacking the process of change is slow and limited. However, high level of literacy is not sufficient to bring change in the society as poverty stands in the way of it. Likewise, numerical strength alone is also not sufficient to facilitate mobility and achieve political power. It may bring change in one or two dimensions, not all-round development. Therefore, a holistic perspective is required to comprehend the change. The present study attempts a comparative understanding of social change in two Loi (Scheduled Caste) villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram in their social, cultural, economic and political dimensions.

Rationale of the Study

The reviewd studies reveal that the scheduled castes in India have been studied in various dimensions of social change such as social, cultural, economic and political. These studies include those few ones from Northeast India and Manipur as well. Even the processes of change like sanskritization and modernization of the scheduled castes are common in India as a whole and Manipur in particular. Yet, the dynamics and tenor of these processes are quite different in Manipur as compared to the rest of India. In the rest of India, politicisation of the scheduled castes has been

corresponding to their sanskritization and modernization whereas in Manipur, it is political awakening rather than politicisation which has taken place alongwith the two other processes of change, i.e., sanskritization and modernization. Besides, the changes among the scheduled castes are free from conflicts or opposition from higher castes in view of the flexible caste system in this peripheral region of the society. Thus, a question arises: What patterns of social change are perceived among the Lois of Manipur? The question has not been attempted from a sociological perspective in the studies reviewed here from Northeast India and Manipur.

The Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows:

I. To understand the patterns / processes of social change among the Lois
II. To know the causes and consequences of social change among the Lois
III. To examine the planning social change and development among the Scheduled Castes in the North East
IV. To arrive at a framework explaining the social change among the weaker sections in India

The Research Questions

The following research questions were framed to investigate social change among the Lois of Manipur:

I. Is the traditional kinship structure of the Lois changing?
II. Is the traditional economic organization of the Lois changing?
III. Is the traditional power structure of the Lois changing?
IV. Is the traditional Loi culture changing?
V. Are the traditional health status and health care patterns of the Lois changing?
VI. Is the educational status of the Lois changing?
VII. Is the traditional communication system of the Lois changing?
VIII. Is the change in the Loi life predominating the continuity?
IX. Is the change among the Lois occurring through sanskritization?
X. Is the change among the Lois occurring through modernization?
XI. Is the change among the Lois caused by the democratic political set up?
XII. Is the change among the Lois caused by the state's policies?

XIII. Is the change among the Lois caused by the state's development programmes?

XIV. Is the consequence of the changes among the Lois perceived in their mainstreaming and reduced social gap with the meitei?

XV. Is the development planning for Scheduled Castes in Northeast India found effective?

XVI. Is the modernization framework suitable for development and maintaining of weaker sections all over India?

The Research Methodology

The study explains the socio-economic and political changes among the Lois in Manipur in comparative framework with reference to the two Loi villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram. Changes in the Loi villages are both induced as well as non-induced. To understand these changes, structural-functional perspective has been widely used in the social science researches on the Scheduled Castes. The present study has adopted this framework after a thorough examination of various theoretical frameworks which are discussed here.

(i) Theoretical Framework

Social change refers to a significant change in social behaviour or change in some larger social system. There are different theories or frameworks explaining social change. These are as follows:

(a) Evolutionary Theories

Evolutionary theories based on the assumption that societies gradually change from simple to more complex forms. August Comte, Lewis Henry Morgan, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin are some of the prominent evolutionary theorists. According to them social change meant progress toward something better. They saw change as positive and beneficial. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization. L.H Morgan (1964) believed that there were three basic stages in the process: savagery, barbarism and civilization. Auguste Comte's ideas (1915) relating to the three stages in the development of human thought and also of society; namely, the theological, the metaphysical and the positive in a way represent the three basic stages of social change. The evolutionary theory does not seem to explain the changes taking place

among the Lois. The changes among the Lois are taking place in contemporary times as programmed and non-programmed changes.

(b) Conflict Theories

Conflict theory assumes that social behaviour can be best understood in terms of tension and conflict between groups and individuals. The theory highlights the forces producing instability, struggle and social disorganization. It assumes that every society is subjected at every moment to change, therefore, social change is ubiquitous. Every society experiences at every moment social conflict, hence social conflict is ubiquitous. According to the conflict theorists, structural differentiation is the source of conflict and social change occurs only through this conflict. This theory also does not apply to the changes among Lois because differentiation in economy, polity and culture has not produced any tension as their kinship structure and intercommunity relations have not undergone any sweeping changes.

(c) Social – Psychological Theories

The underlying assumption of the social – psychological theory is that societies develop as a result of certain psychological factors. Instead of concentrating on technological and environmental factors, ideas, structural conditions or social conflict, the theory focuses on individuals with unique personality attributes. It deals with psychological determinants that drive people to act, to push forward, to invent, to discover, create, acquire, build or expand (Vago 1980:65). In case of the Lois no individual driving force of change has been found. Hence, this set of theories is also not applicable to study social change among the Lois.

(d) Structural – Functional Theories

The structural–functional theory is a theory of order and stability, which is also called equilibrium theory. The theory is concerned with explaining large- scale social structures and relationship. It attempts to explain why and how certain social structures work in the society by ascertaining their functions. Social structures are the various parts of social system such as, family, government, economic system, religion, education and political institutions, and according to Merton (1957) function refers to those consequences of any social activity that make for adaptation and adjustment of a given structure or its component parts. Durkheim (1947) in his study of "Division of Labour in Society" makes a clear distinction between the function of the division of labour and its efficient cause. The basic function of the division of labour is the integration of society and its cause was the increasing moral

density among the people. Redcliff – Brown (1956) sees function as a contribution to the continuing existence of the social structure. The continuity of structure, according to him, is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interaction of individual human beings and of the organized groups into which they are united. He has given the examples of punishment of a crime and a funeral ceremony for the maintenance of the structural continuity. Talcott Parsons (1961) has used the terms differentiation, adaptive upgrading, inclusion and value generalization for understanding evolution and social change. For Parsons, differentiation is the key to the evolution of social system. He argued that without differentiation of role-allocation and accompanying social stratification, specialization and technological development would be impossible. He feels that the process of evolutionary change involves the enhancement of society's adaptive capacities- people's ability to attain a wide variety of goals. When people have adaptive capacity, then they can no longer exclude from the society based on caste, sex, age or religion. Lastly, he talks about value generalization to legitimize wider variety of goals and functions of its sub-units. Among the Lois, various social structures in the process of differentiation as their functioning is adaptive to the influences of the external forces-induced or non-induced.

Of these theories, the structural-functional theory or framework appeared most appropriate to analyse the changes among the Lois. The changes among the Lois are perceptible at both the levels, structural and functional, in the Loi village system. Besides, the changes are obviousely induced as well as non-induced and the external factors like politico-legal provisions, development programmes, education, religious conversion etc. have been working at least effectively after Independence. Thus, the change among the Lois does not reveal evolutionary, conflict or socio-psychological patterns, rather the changes are most visible in the structures and functions of the Loi village system.

(ii) *Types and Sources of Data*

For the study, mainly oral field data have been collected from the households from the two Loi villages in Manipur. However, secondary data have been also used from books, journals, reports etc. to understand the research question in a wider perspective.

(iii) Universe and Units of the Study

The Scheduled Castes in Manipur are mainly settled in four districts; namely, Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur and Thoubal. The study has been conducted in the two Loi villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram with a population of 428 and 2093. The former, located in the Imphal West district, is 17 km from the Imphal town whereas the latter, located in the Bishnupur district, is 27 km from the Imphal town as well as from the Bishnupur town. Out of the eight Scheduled Caste Loi villages, only two Loi villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram have been purposively selected for a comparative study. The two villages are different not only in terms of size and distance from urban centres but also in terms of local social setting where Leimaram is the only Loi village located amidst the Meitei villages while Koutruk is located amidst other Loi villages. The difference of social change is perceptible in these two villages. According to the Census 2001, the Scheduled Castes constitute 2.6% of the total population of Manipur whereas they constitute 1% and less than 1% of the total population of the Imphal West district and the Bishenpur district respectively. The rural Sheduled Caste population constitutes 1.7%, 5% and 0.8% of Manipur, the Imphal West district and the Bishnupur district respectively. Thus, the two villages offer structural constrast in many respects for examination of changes taking place among the Lois.

The two villages constituted the universe of the study and household/ family was taken as the unit of data collection because it was felt that many data were related to household or family as a whole, which could not have been collected at individual level. Besides, considering the manageable number of households in both the villages, all the households were accessed to, for data collection, by using census method. However, for the purpose of data analysis, both, household and individual, have been used as units as per the requirement of the analysis.

(iv) Techniques and Tools for Data Collection

For the study, the data were mainly collected by conducting interviews with the villagers in their households. Each and every household was visited to collect oral responses. An interview schedule was constructed to record the responses of the villagers from the households. The schedule consisted of questions related to social, economic, political and cultural structures and functions with a view to detect change

in the villages. Besides, observation and case studies~~were~~ also used to supplement the interview technique.

(v) Methods of Analysis

The analysis of data focussed on both the structures and functions of the Loi in the two villages and patterns of structural and functional changes have been brought out. Though structural differentiation and functional dynamics were perceived from conflict analysis also, no significant conflicts were noticed in the study. Hence, structural-functional method thoroughly pervades the analysis of the study.

Scope of the Study

India is a land of unity and diversity. Various racial groups settled in different parts of the country are speaking different languages, practising different religious beliefs, making different ethnic groups and living in different socio-economic conditions. Scheduled Castes are also found to be distributed across these diversities. Much has been studied to understand the social change among the Scheduled Castes in the country. However, no full–fledged study is so far available on social change among the Scheduled Castes in Manipur. The Scheduled Castes, specially Lois and Yaithibis of Manipur represent quite a different version of the Scheduled Castes in India because the caste system in this part of the country is not as rigid as in the mainland. Therefore, the study of the Loi bring out the patterns of changes in a scheduled caste community in the periphery of Indian Caste Society and highlights the differences of social change between the Loi and the mainland Scheduled Castes. By this, it enriches theoretically and methodologically the existing knowledge on change and development among the weaker sections in the Indian society.

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