



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi/2023/12.11.57>
www.ijmer.in

MANIPUR IN THE WORLD OLYMPICS GAMES: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

Sanasam Yaiphaba Singh

PhD Scholar, Department of Sociology, Manipur University

Abstract

A significant development of the sports movement in Manipur in the post-independence era was the formation of the Manipur Olympic Association in 1974 and the establishment of the All Manipur Sports Association in 1948. One of their main goals is to produce Olympians, and they started to achieve it when Y. Madneshore (Babu) was selected for the Indian Hockey camp for the 1968 Mexico Olympics, and P. Nilakamal was a member of the Indian Hockey team at the 1984 Los Angeles, U.S.A. It was only in 1976 that the Manipur Hockey Team as a state team was allowed to participate in the National Championships at Cuttack, though a player from Manipur was the key player of the Assam Hockey Team in 1968 at Ootacamud. Till the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, 19 athletes participated in five disciplines and won three medals. 11 Olympians are women, and two of them won two medals. Manipur is called the ‘Power House of Indian Sports’ though the state is comparatively small in terms of population, geographical area, lack of modern sports infrastructure, low socio-economic conditions, etc. Some of the contributing factors are the lively continuation of sports culture, attractive awards, including government jobs, inspiration from achievers, firm will to success, and due recognition in society. But a deeper look into the social perspectives in terms of socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-psychological aspects will reveal their secrecy of achievement so as to enable the formulation of an effective strategy for further achievement.

Keywords: Olympic Association, three medals, national championship, Socio-cultural and socio-psychological.

INRODUCTION

The first Olympic Games was held in Olympia, Greece in 776 BC with a few games, namely boxing, wrestling, javelin and discus throwing, running, jumping and chariot racing. The first modern Olympic Games was held in Athens, Greece in 1896 and 13 countries participated in it to bring young athletes together from all over the world to bring peace. The games have been held every 4 years since, except in 1916 during World War I and in 1940 and 1944 during World War II. The last Olympic Games was held at Tokyo in 2020 and the next Olympic Games will be held at Paris in 2023. 19 players from Manipur have participated in the Olympic Games in various events so far. Only one player could play in the Olympic Games in 1984. But the number of participants has been increased to 5 at London 2012, 6 at Rio 2016 and 5 at Tokyo 2020. The present paper attempts to examine how the players of Manipur have been able to play at the National and International levels, particularly in the Olympic Games, from a sociological point of view. The study covers the relation between modern games and the traditional indigenous games and other aspects of social life. Related books, articles, published profiles and case studies have been used as sources of data. Discussion with veteran players could reveal interesting and significant insights which might not be available in printed documents. The study is also expected to reveal issues relating to the prevailing conditions which are hampering higher achievement of the players.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Till the Olympic Games 2020 in Tokyo, 19 players from the States have participated in the Olympic Games since 1984 in the sports disciplines of hockey (07), weightlifting (04), boxing (04), judo (03) and archery (01). In the Rio Olympic Games 2016, the numbers of sports people from Manipur were 4 in hockey, weightlifting and Archery, while it was in hockey, weightlifting, judo and boxing at Tokyo 2020. In 2014, 57 players from the States participated in the 17th Asian Games at Icheon and they got 7 medals. In the 19th Asian Games, Hangzhou, China 43athlets from Manipur



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2023/12.11.57>
www.ijmer.in

were to represent the country, and 09 of them won one gold in Men’s Hockey, one silver in Wushu and one bronze each in Women’s hockey, Sepaktakraw and Kayaking and Canoeing.

As the socio-economic condition of most of the families of the players of Manipur was low, they were in need of jobs for their livelihood. They could hardly get suitable government jobs in Manipur. Therefore, they look for jobs outside the state. But, unlike the boys, families of the female players don’t like their daughters to work and stay outside the home state. Besides, there is a social constraint which women are expected to follow. All the 6 Olympians of the Rio Olympics (2016) from Manipur could not get jobs in Manipur, and therefore, all of them are working outside Manipur. Another vivid example in this regard is that a number of sports played by Manipur were played by representing other states and Services in the 34th National Games (2011) due to the apathy of the state Government of Manipur (S Neken 2012, P-1) and they got as many as 124 medals for these states and Services. The facilities for world class development for sports are also very small in Manipur. Rio Olympians Kothajit and Chinglensana whose parents were not economically sound, stated that pursuing sports in Manipur was very difficult because facilities for the sport are very little (Manuja Veerappa, TNN July 20, 2016).

It would be interesting to study the indigenous games of Manipur and its impact on modern games. There have been different types of traditional games in Manipur. It is considered necessary to study these games in relation with the modern development of the games. Most of the games are directly or indirectly related to the ritual ceremonies or festivals relating to various deities of Meitei.

One of the important draw-backs for maintaining sustainability of the standard of the players is the lack of support. Modern games require high degree training and resources and encouragement from the authorities and general public.

There has been dissatisfaction among the players and even among promoters of some of the games against the discrimination among the various disciplines in the state. One woman hockey player of the state, who was the captain of the Indian Hockey team at the Olympics, expressed discontentment over the discrimination shown towards hockey players. No one could recognise her when she was working on running trains in Mumbai as a ticket collector. There are many players who work hard as players, even neglecting their general education, but can not achieve national and international goals.

SPORT EVOLUTION IN MANIPUR

The study of sports or a particular game is usually and conveniently done with reference to the historical dimension. In fact, all aspects of social and cultural life are based upon the socio-political and economic events of the past sporting traditions, like traditions in general, may be seen as a set of social practices which seek to celebrate and inculcate certain behavioural norms and values, implying continuity with a real or imagined past and usually associated with widely accepted rituals or other forms of symbolic behaviour. (Grant Jarvie P -54).

Regarding physical fitness and stamina, ‘the Manipuris themselves are a fine stalwart race. They are always cheerful, even on a long and tiring march, and are good-humoured under any difficulties and never apparently conscious of fatigue. Hungry or not, they are always ready to march, and march all day and all night, if necessary’ (James Johnstone P-98).

THE TRADITIONAL GAMES IN MANIPUR

There have been various indigenous games for babies, children, young people and old people for both male and female. Some of the games are Mukna (Manipuri wrestling), Mukna Kangjei or Khong Kangjei (Wrestling cum foot hockey), Sagol Kangjei (Polo), Yubi Lakpi (snatching of coconut), Woo-Laobi, Hiyang-Tannaba (Boat Race), Arambai Hunba, etc. which are outdoor indigenous games while Kang is an indoor game. Besides, there are different types of indoor and outdoor games played by the children. Some of them are, Tong Tong Tongdrumba, Mei Loubi Karoubi, Ipa Ipu Son Sa, Kwak Kwak, Seboti Kaonaba, Uraobi, Fibul Habi, Cheitek Kotpi, Sagoltongbi, Kei Yen, Laiphadibi, Khutlotpi, Marum Konbi, Nom Nom Sagai tong etc. (W. Budha Singh).



Cover Page



DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi/2023/12.11.57>
www.ijmer.in

Most of the games are directly or indirectly related to the ceremonies and rituals of the various gods and goddesses of Meitei. Some of them are Sagol Kangjei (Polo), Kang, Mukna (Wrestling), Lamjen (Race), Phibul Habi, Mukna Kangjei (Wrestling cum foot hockey) etc. There are underlying philosophies behind all these games. These games have been in the life and blood of the people and they have been continuously in existence (W. Budha 1992 P-4). In fact, there is always a mythological or written record of each of these traditional games in the Chaitharol-kumbaba, (the Royal Chronicle of Manipur) and the other published Puya (old scriptures) like Chainarol (arts of fighting), Chada Laihui, Khumanlon, Ningthourol Lambuba, Changleirol etc., and Kangjeirol, Thanggourol, Leishenlon, Ereng -puwari, Pudim, Thanglon Thangchat among the unpublished Puya. It is still believed that most of these games have been in practice from the reign of the gods (Preface of the book, Indigenous Games of Manipur (W. Budha,1992). Kangjei and Mukna are still a portion of the ritual ceremony of the Lai Haraoba festival.

All the games except Kang are more or less martial arts oriented games and, as such, playing the games is difficult, risky and there is every chance of injury if not played skilfully. However, though these games were dangerous, people liked and played them.

Another special characteristic of these indigenous games is that they are played not merely for the love of the game but also as part of military combat training patronised by the kings of Manipur through the ages. Polo players formed the bulk of the Manipur Cavalry during the reign of kings.

PROCESS OF SOCIALISATION AND MODERN SPORTS MOVEMENT IN MANIPUR

The process of socialisation of games and sports was found from as early as 33 AD. The game of Sagolkangjei had become an organised game during the reign of King Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, whose reign began in 33 AD according to Cheithao Kumbaba (Hemchandra 2012) there have been unique story, and philosophy for each and every indigenous game. People, both men and women, are involved in the activities of physical fitness for the protection of themselves and also to protect the nation. The entire able person knew and participated in several indigenous games. The king also actively patronised the performance of the games. The process of socialisation of the modern games and sports can be considered as a continuation of the indigenous games of Manipur. Many of the indigenous games are almost similar to those of the modern games. After the Anglo-Manipur War, 1891, the British army introduced the playing of football and hockey at the Manung Kangjeibung, inside the present Kangla (old Palace inside the fort). Rev. William Pettigrew, the then teacher of the Johnstone School, Imphal, introduced football to his students in 1899. The playing of the game also started in the 1930s among the British Indian army in Manipur. At that time, people of Manipur could see the playing of football and hockey and they had a strong desire to participate in playing the games.

During the pre-independence period, Maharaja Sir Churachand Singh of Manipur, who reigned for fifty years from 1891 to 1941, did yeoman service for the development of sports in Manipur. He introduced various modern games. Some of them were cricket, football, tennis and hockey. He was a good player. At his initiative, hockey and football matches were said to have been organised between the Maharaja Team, Palton Team and Johnstone Team. The Maharaja's team consisted of players sponsored by him. Palton team was composed of, the army personnel, while the players of Sir James Johnstone team were from Johnstone School. Hockey tournaments started at that time with the hockey cup provided by a prominent person, namely Dr. Ningthoujam Lairen (Seram Neken).

At the initiative of the Maharaja, Manipur participated in the Olympic Games held at Jorhat, Assam in 1940. Manipur was the champion team, winning most of the events. In 1920 Shri Phoni Mukerjee, a Bengali who settled in Manipur, along with a few local youths formed the Manipur Town Club. It was under the banner of this club that organized tournaments, mainly football and hockey at Kalimai ground (at present, 1st Bn. Manipur Rifles ground). Manipur Town Club also organised the 'Yakairol Hockey Cup', donated by Dr. N. Leiren Singh regularly during the same period (S. Lokeshore).

The All Manipur Sports Association was formed in 1948. With the formation of the Manipur Olympic Association in 1947, Manipur Olympic Games were regularly held up to 1954. The annual Olympic Games were organised under a new name, the Manipur State Games 1955. It was organised by the All Manipur Sport Association (AMSA). The AMSA, during the time, was the controlling body of sports and games in Manipur. However, different sports associations of different disciplines were formed and affiliated with the respective federations at the national level.



Cover Page



PARTICIPATION IN OLYMPICS

The impact of the development of the sports in Manipur and the significant achievement of sports movement in Manipur was the participation of the players in the Olympic Games. In Los Angeles Olympic 1984 P. Nilakamal Singh participated as hockey player. He is the first participant in Olympic Games not only from Manipur but also North-East India. The appearance of Nilakamal Singh in the world Olympic gave a fresh enthusiasm among the sportpersons in Manipur. This could be observed as a turning point in the sports history of Manipur. Soon after, Ksh Thoiba Singh also participated in the Olympic Games in 1988 at Seoul, Korea. Their achievement provided a new thinking among the players of Manipur that they also could play in Olympic Games. The sports movement in Manipur led to the participation at the Olympics from 1984 to till the last Tokyo Olympic 2020. There are 19 players who have participated Olympics in various events as under.

MANIPUR OLYMPIAD: YEAR WISE AND GAME WISE PARTICIPATIONS

Sl No	Name	Game/Event	Year and Venue	No. of Participation
1	Pangabam Nilakomal Singh	Hockey	1984: Los Angeles	1
2	Kshtrimayum Thoiba Singh	Hockey	1988: Seoul	1
3	Soubam Suresh Singh	Boxing	2000: Sydney	1
4	Lourembam Brojeshori Devi	Judo	2000: Sydney	1
5	Ngangom Dingku Singh	Boxing	2000: Sydney	1
6	Thingbajam Sanamacha Chanu	Weightlifting	2000: Sydney 2004:, Athens	2
7	Nameirakpam Kunjarani Devi	Weightlifting	2004: Athens	1
8	Khumujam Tombi Devi	Judo	2008: Beijing	1
9	Laishram Devendro Singh	Boxing	2012: London	1
10	Ngangbam Soniya Chanu	Weightlifting	2012: London	1
11	Laishram Bombayla Devi	Archery	2008: Beijing 2012: London 2016: Rio	3
12	Khangbam Kothajit Singh	Hockey	2012: London 2016: Rio	2
13	Thokchom Anuradha Devi	Hockey	2016: Rio	1
14	Kangujam Chinglensana Singh	Hockey	2016: Rio	1
15	Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom	Boxing	2012: London 2020: Tokyo	2
16	Pukhrambam Sushila Chanu	Hockey	2016: Rio 2020: Tokyo	2
17	Saikhom Mirabai Chanu	Weightlifting	2016:, Rio 2020: Tokyo	2
18	Shanglakpam Nilakanta Sharma	Hockey	2020: Tokyo	1
19	Likmabam Sushila Devi	Judo	2020: Tokyo	1
				26



Cover Page



From the above table it is observed that L.Bombayla Devi participated consecutively at 3 Olympics at Beijing 2008, London 2012 and Rio 2016 in the game of Archery. Th. Sanamacha Chanu also participated consecutively in 2 Olympics at Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004. K.Kothajit Singh in Hockey, P. Sushila Chanu in Hockey and Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting have also consecutively participated in 2 Olympics Games at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 while Mangte Chungneijang Mary Kom participated at London 2012 and Tokyo 2020. There is high expectation of Manipur players being selected for the games in the Paris 2023.

ISSUE

The present standard of the sports is quite different from that of the past Olympics. The standard of games and sports included in the Olympic Games is of a very high standard in which human beings can perform at their highest level. So, the players need adequate financial support, a high degree of coaching, besides public support. Manipur is a poor state and most of the players belong to low-income families. This can be rightly ascertained from all the 19 Olympians. They have to face problems with meeting the expenses for purchasing the requirements for the games and also to meet their daily expenses. Besides, they had to find time to practice for the games during their student life. Many of them have to leave their general education so as to enable them to give full attention to the respective games. Some of the sports organisations have extended financial help for the purchasing of their kits. The food taken by them is ordinary food consumed by their family. The daily meal of rice and vegetables consumed in the ordinary family can provide minimum nutrition for the player in initial stages. There was also no proper coach of international standard in the state. Therefore, they have to look for going outside the state where standard coaching centres and other facilities are available.

CONCLUSION

Sports are suitable for the soil, climate, food habits, culture and the people of Manipur. The flexibility of the muscles of people is another advantage. The present status of the games and sports can be observed as a continuous process of socialisation among the players, sports organisers, authorities and the general public in the society of the state. The indigenous games like Mukna Kanjei, Polo (sagol Kangjei), Sarit Sara (martial-arts), Mukna(wrestling, Judo), playing Arambai, Yubi lakpi (ruby) etc facilitated the development of games like hockey, boxing, archery, judo, weightlifting etc. The continuation processes of socialisation of sports can be observed in the state. As the development of sports has been continuing in the state, the development of sports of the international standard can be achieved through suitable programmes and initiatives in certain suitable areas of the games on a priority basis. The sports authorities and organisers require discussion in detail on the maintenance of the standard of players in international events, particularly in the World Olympic Games. The number of participants was increased from 1 in 1984 to 4 in the next Olympics in 2000 and it also remained as 4 in 2012. It was increased to 6 in 2016. The increasing trend could be maintained if all the necessary facilities including coaching, technical support and adequate incentives are made available well in time and also public support is provided in its widest terms.

References:

- 5th National Game, Imphal- Manipur, 1999: Souvenir
- ECONOMIC SURVEY MANIPUR :2016-17
- Singh L Ibongohal and Khelchandra N,(1989) Edited .Cheitharol Kumbaba, (Royal Chronicle of Manipur)
- Grant, J. (2006). Sport, culture and society. *TJ International Ltd. Cornwall.*
- Harris, J. C. (2006). Sociology of sport: Expanding horizons in the subdiscipline. *Quest, 58(1), 71-91.*
- Hemchandra Chanam, 2010 (edited) *Leithak Leikharol (The Cosmology)*
- Hodson, T. C.. (1908), *The Meitheis*. Akansha, Delhi, 2010, Indian Reprint.
- Johnstone, S. J. (1971). *Manipur and the Naga Hills*. Vivek, Delhi.
- Serra Pamela(2015) : Sociology of Sport : Chapter 4,-: Principle of Sport Management, Oxford Press University.



Cover Page



- Singh Sanasam Amal (2012): Social History of Manipur: Dynamic of Sport Culture and Movement in Manipur in the book '*Social History of Manipur*' edited by H. Sudhir, SUNMARG PUBLISHERS AND DISTRIBUTORS
- Singh Thochom Komal (1985) :*Meitrabakki Mukna Kangjei and Sagol Kangjeigi Haorakpham*,(The origin of the Kangjei and Sagol Kangjeigi of Kangleipak),
- Singh W. Budha (1982),Indigenous Games of Meiteis (*Meiteishingi Mahousadagi Shagonaduna Leijaraklaba Mashanashing*),
- Singh, Y. (2005). *Sociology in Sports*. Sports Publication.

ARTICLES

- Frey, J. H., & Eitzen, D. S. (1991). Sport and society. *Annual review of sociology*, 17(1), 503-522.
- Goswami Ms Ratneshwori. (2013-18) *Akao Parei Chankhrabasing* (series of profile and stories of sports veterans published in local paper, Huyen Lanpao, Manipur :, senior sport journalist
- Hemchandra Chanam (2012). Polo and Pony in Manipur : What Ancient Manuscripts Say , Souvenir, 6th Manipur Polo International.
- International Olympic Committee; official web:olympics.com
- Neken Seram,(2016) .Hockey in Manipur : Past and Present , Souvenir 6th Hockey India Sub Junior Men National Championship A & B Division 2016, Imphal.
- Singh RK. Madhurjit, 1999,Indigenous Games of Manipur: Souvenir 5th National Games 1999, Imphal Manipur.
- Singh Seram Lokeshor, 1999.Sport Movement in Manipur. Souvenir 5th National Games 1999, Imphal Manipur.
- Singh Seram Lokeshor, 2023. Aniraksuba Manipur Olympic Association Semkheiba (The formation of 2nd Manipur Olympic Association), Sangai Express Manipur edition. May 5 2023.
- The Sangai Express Imphal:, October 11 2014(Govt takes note of contributions from sportspersons)
- Huyen Lanpao (Manipur daily), October 9-2023, p10.