

The Impact of Hindu Faith on Meiteiron

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 13:9 September 2013

Abstract

The paper focuses on the assimilation of loanwords through Hinduism in Meiteiron. Indo-Aryan words particularly Bengali words began to wave into Meiteiron vocabulary from the late 18th century to the 20th century. With more and more frequent contact with Bengali speakers and also through Bengali writings, loanwords became a typical linguistic phenomenon. So the study of Bengali loanwords in Meiteiron is of significant importance.

Key words: borrowing, culture, Bengali, Hindu faith.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the borrowed religious terms from Indo-Aryan languages particularly from Bengali that entered into Meiteiron. As the pioneers of Hinduism were Bengali speakers (Jhaljit, 1965), it is quite natural that loanwords have also been incorporated with the acceptance of Hinduism by the Meiteiron speakers. So, most of the loanwords takes the Bengali pronunciation, though their roots are traced to the mother language Sanskrit. It is natural for Meiteiron to adopt words from other language due to their contact with each other. Thus a particular focus is given on the phenomenon of the borrowing of the religious terms.

2. Background

Lexical borrowing can be defined as the adoption of individual words from another language. It happens when two languages are in contact and one language borrows lexical

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item from the other language. According to Matras and Bakker (2003), lexical borrowing concerns about ‘the incorporation in one language of content words from another language’.

“One language may experience changes due to the influence of another language. The speakers of any given language are always in some kind of contact with the speakers of one or more other languages. When two different languages are spoken in adjacent areas, speakers on both the sides of the boundary will be exposed to the other language, and may often gain some fluency in that other language. Because of conquest or migration, speakers of two more languages may be mixed together in a single community. Speakers of one language may travel and become exposed to different language spoken to elsewhere” (Trask 1999).

“It is common for one language to take words from another language and make them part of its own vocabulary: these are call loan words and the process is called linguistic borrowing” (Campbell 1998). Borrowing occurs when one language adds a word or morpheme from another language to its own lexicon. Apparently the process is called adaptation. A language may borrow a word directly or indirectly.

3. Reasons for Borrowing

- a) The first reason may be because the recipient language does not have a word for a new concept from other language or culture and a word is needed.
- b) The second reason is for prestige. Some language typically enjoy more prestige than others, the speaker of less prestigious language are often eager to show off their command to a more prestigious language by introducing some of its words into their own speech.

In most cases, borrowing takes place, on the motives of ‘need’ and ‘prestige’. Especially after the influence of Hinduism, in order to fill the gap in Meiteiron the language has borrowed a large number of Indo-Aryan loanwords. Such as the Indo-Aryan loanwords /sərgə/, /nəɾək/ have been borrowed to fill the gap of the concept of ‘heaven’ and ‘hell’ in Meiteiron respectively. And based on the motive of ‘prestige’ the Indo-Aryan words such as /ɕɔl/ ‘water’, /choron/ ‘feet’ were incorporated in place of /isiŋ/ ‘water’ and /k^hoŋ/ ‘feet’ respectively.

In the Meitei religious beliefs and practices both the reasons are equally applicable, the borrowed words are introduced in the religious recitation of mantras, like ‘*om nammo: bhagabate, basu deva yu namo*’ which is considered as the first process of Sankritisation and in the communication in the religious ceremonies which can apparently be seen with words like *bhakti* ‘devotion’, *kannya* ‘bride’, ‘*gril*’, *prasad* ‘the remnants of food offer to God’ etc.

We can find in the loanwords in conversation that usually occurs during religious ceremonies like marriage, birth and even death though the loan words are spoken in their nativised forms as shown below.

Loanwords	Nativised	Gloss
kəŋja	kəiŋə	‘bride’, ‘girl’
jatra	zətra	‘journey’
məndapa	mandop	‘a pillered-outdoor hall’
divas	dibos	‘celebration’, ‘a day’ etc.

4. Assimilation of Loanwords from Bengali through Hinduism

Language is not an autonomous entity as it is embedded in the society. Therefore, societal changes have linguistic consequences. This is seen in the effects shown by the

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changes occurring in the social system of Manipur upon Meitei ceremonial terminology. This is the enrichment of lexicon of Meiteiron through borrowing. Lexical borrowing is a common phenomenon that when a language comes in contact with another language. It is often explained in terms of lexical needs and sociolinguistics innovation. One purpose of using loanwords is to fill a lexical or semantic gap (Hock and Joshep 1996).

When Meiteiron came into contact with the Indo-Aryan language which was of dominant culture, there have been replacements, restriction of meaning, expansion of meaning of the term borrowed and subsequently some phonological modification as a result of the process of acculturation. Vaishnavism came to Manipur, and we can see the two different faiths the Vaishnavism and Meitei faith mingling and going together like in any cultural contact situation. And what needs to be stressed is that the ethos of Meitei culture has been systematically subsumed within the values of an increasingly powerful socio-cultural hegemony of Hinduism.

The history of Meiteiron is interesting for several reasons, including its flexibility in borrowing from other languages namely, Bengali, Hindi, Assamese and English at various times in history. In studying borrowing, it is possible to see layers of influences from these languages. This as a result, has enriched its vocabularies over the centuries. The first major influence on Meiteiron is from Bengali with the advent of Hinduism in the 18th century through Bengali speaking religious leaders. The most observable intercultural contact between Meitei and Bengali cultures is the set of loanwords imported into the vocabulary of Meiteiron. It had a great impact from 18th century onwards and to a lesser degree its sister language Hindi has been a continuous source of loanwords. The most obvious domain to see Bengali borrowing used in Meiteiron is in religious and ritual aspects.

As Meiteis adopted Hinduism, it is quite natural that the Bengali language, the custom and culture soon provided the basis for a thorough Hinduisation of Meiteis. The Bengali influence through Hinduisation on Meiteiron went on a good deal farther than religious terminology. It also spreads to other aspects of Meiteiron relating to education, literature, administration and communication, etc. Although the Bengali and Meiteiron were genetically different from each other the linguistic superiority of Bengali language became overt; some knowledge of Bengali language and culture was considered a sign of education and status.

As a process of socio- religious change the change of imitating Bengali became much wider which even included dresses, food habits, Bengali songs etc. In the process, Meiteis have completely transformed their life style; they left their meat eating habits which includes eggs but continued eating fish as a delicacy. It appears that everything Bengali was superior to Meitei counterparts. This view as a whole, however, may not be correct. However, it would not much of an exaggeration that if we say Meiteis have been thoroughly influenced by Bengali life style. Over the last three centuries, a large number of Bengali words entered into Meiteiron. Some of these words have their etymology to other languages such as Hindi and Sanskrit. It is important to remember that many Sanskrit terms were introduced to Meiteiron largely through the medium of Bengali.

5. Importation and Introduction of Bengali Orthography

A point worth noting of the heavy impact of Hinduism at this juncture, during the reign of king Garibniwaz (1709-1748) the indigenous Meitei script was completely replaced by Bengali orthography. The 18th century saw the definitive triumph of Bengali orthography over Meitei orthography. The Meitei orthography rapidly ceased to be the medium of writing. The

adoption of Bengali orthography was also probably instrumental in the process of lexical importation of Bengali into Meiteiron.

Quite apart from revealing changes, the new orthography gave Meiteiron quite a new look. A number of new consonant symbols were introduced for example, b, d, q, b^h, d^h, q^h, vowel contrasts for example short and long /i/ and short and long /u/ were also introduced in the writing of Meiteiron (Pusparani and Pramodini, 2010). Not all these changes were important because there are a lot of confusions and ambiguities created with spelling system of Meiteiron which continued till date. This situation even makes Meiteiron more difficult to learn.

The spelling varied from writer to writer and even within the work of one writer. However it is very clear that it was the cultural and religious interaction with Bengali that primarily brought about a noticeable influence of Bengali on Meiteiron. The early loanwords were so well assimilated into Meiteiron that they were soon felt as not in any way foreign. Thus the adoption of those lexical items impinges on the broader area of religious culture cognition and intricately connected to the establishment of a broadly based layer of Bengali vocabulary in Meiteiron. This probably made it easier for the language to accept later Hindi loanwords. Indeed, one of the results of the influx of Indo-Aryan loans was probably to make Meiteiron more generous to IA words and less prone to use its own resources for word creation in the last three hundred years or so.

The heavy influences of Bengali language and culture is also perceptible in the fact that Bengali language was the medium of educational instruction in Bengali schools established in Manipur in the year 1934. While one might like to argue that Hinduism is not held in the same reverence and awe as it once enjoyed, there is still a tangible force among Meiteiron speakers to this day. Deeply held cultural values make themselves present in the lexicon whether they would

like it or not; this is evident in the kinship terms of this language, for example, /bəba/ ‘father’, /dəda/ ‘brother’, /kəka/ ‘uncle’, /k^hura/ ‘paternal uncle’, /mamə/ ‘maternal uncle’, etc., which have been well integrated that they became part and parcel of Meiteiron without which Meiteiron cannot do away (Pramodini, 2011).

The study of borrowed words points to at least two important facts. One is a historical background which is found in the study of religious terms of linguistic origin. This reveals a wide variety of influence from an entirely different language. As said earlier, in addition to the native Bengali words, there are a myriad of specialized religious words from Sanskrit such as /səkti/ ‘power’, /d^hərmə/ ‘religion’, /debi/ ‘goddess’. On the other hand, the usages of the borrowed words may point to the fact that there was a strong intensity of religious devotion.

This has, and then revealed the significance and importance of Hinduism to Meiteis’ indigenous culture and belief so deep that the words became intimate and integrated part of the lexicon of Meiteiron. This is clearly visible when many speakers of Meiteiron were to show off their command of the donor language (obviously a prestige factor) by spattering their speech and writing with the words and phrases, they borrowed from Bengali in the past. Loanwords may serve the function of tagging the status of the speaker as trendy or advanced.

Meiteiron has borrowed many loanwords which highlight the prestige factor at the social facade. As mentioned earlier, by the time, Meiteiron speakers have accepted Hinduism, Bengali was the language that people considered prestigious. Therefore, this language was the mark of learned person. Later on, Hindi and English have also become important and useful languages. These languages are considered as signals of progress and modernization. The use of loanwords symbolized power, wealth and prestige of the countries of the source languages and this naturally gains momentum towards standardized use of Meiteiron. As a result, an enormous amount of

loanwords have been imported into Meiteiron primarily on the basis of prestige motive. As in any kind of language contact situation the contact between Bengali and Meiteiron too, the influence is strongest in the field of vocabulary. As the Meitei society change there are new things that need new names, values, concept etc, hence new words are borrowed to handle them confining only to the area of vocabulary. However, it does not mean to say that there will not be any marked influences on grammar and syntax of Meiteiron. This aspect could be an important area of future research.

6. Cultural Influence of Hinduism on Meitei Speech Community

As has been discussed above the adoption of Hinduism by the Meiteis brought profound changes in the uses of language, certain loanwords began to be used in the cultural context as an integral part of the socio-religious culture. The area where influence of Bengali is most clear is unsurprisingly, the lexicon particularly word related to Hindu religion. In some cases the native words co-exists alongside the loanwords for example /irat-puza/ ‘worship’. The expansion of religious vocabulary and others during the last three centuries has gone up at an ever increasing pace that has also resulted in the formation of a large number of hybrid compounds for example /mandop-k^hənbə/ ‘the process of constructing a mandop’, /zətra-təubə/ ‘to start a journey at an auspicious hour’ . Cultural influence on the Manipuri language can be seen in the discussion below.

- 1) It has become a custom in the Meitei religious context that in a religious feast before starting to eat it has become a ritual customary to announce by one of the head Brahman cook as /mahaprasad-lewa-anand/ this means *maha prasad ka lo anand* ‘enjoy the mahaprasad’. Similarly when the eating is over till the head Brahman announces /mahaprasad-lewa-səmapətə/ this means the ‘end of mahaprasad’. Before, this ceremonial

announcement no one is allowed to leave the eating place or even stand up. They must strictly abide by this religious code of conduct.

- 2) With the penetration of Hinduism another religious cultural influence came in the form of invitation card which is known as /nimənrə/ which is a loanword. Meiteis send invitation cards as they believe that the person will become a crow if he/she participates in any kind of religious ceremonies without receiving a /nimənrə/ 'invitation'.
- 3) When a person dies, the usual expression used is /sik^hre/ 'he/she died' or in a more cultured way as /ləik^hdre/ 'he/she is no more'. However, Hindu devotees use a number of euphemistic expressions indicating that they are devotees of Hinduism. In place of /sik^hre/ 'he/she died' expressions such as /(iswargi) nam sonk^hre/ meaning 'he has sung the name (of god)' or if the deceased person is a female /beisnabi oik^hre/ 'she has become a follower of Vaishnav sect' or if the deceased person is a male /beisnabə oik^hre/ 'he has become a follower of Vaishnav sect' or /prapti-oik^hre/ 'he/she is no more'.
- 4) After the advent of Hinduism, during the month of August-September which is the dark half of the month known as Langban in Manipuri, Meiteis began performing the practice of a religious ritual known as /tərpən/. The word is nativised as /tərpən/ where the vowel /ə/ becomes /o/. The word is usually pronounced as /tərpən/ but the nativised version /tərpən/ is mostly used by the older group of people or the uneducated group of people. The practice as well as the term is borrowed from Hindu religious practice. According to the other parts of India it is practiced by offering edible fruits to the water and chanting sacred hymns (mantras). It is a ritual of offering homage to departed souls. Similarly the same ritual is also practiced in the Meitei society. The Meiteis also practice by cutting the fruits into small pieces and offer it to the water by chanting the sacred hymns along with

the names of their departed ancestors. People prefer water body like river to offer /təɾpən/ in view of the belief that any river is like the holy Ganges. If a river is not available in the nearby surrounding then the offering of the /təɾpən/ is performed in a pond. However, for most people in urban areas where it is hard to find even a pond or a river nearby are found to use a big open vessel which is locally called /kompək/. This vessel is filled with water and is being used as a replacement of a pond where the offering is done.

- 5) The Meiteis have a belief that when a person reaches its death bed it has been a practice to rename the person just before his or her death takes place. If he is a man he will be renamed as /mohən das/ and to a woman as /rad^ha dasini/. The significance of such name change lies in the belief that the person who is going to die when he dies and joins gods, up in the heaven he will become the server of the particular god, hence the name of the dying person is rechristened by the name of the god. So it has become a custom to rename the dying person. And the word /das or dasini/ means male and female servant respectively. Thus an excerpt from an invitation card of a death ceremony testifies this statement as

/sirigurugi kripədagi bes olləgə pəɾəməswar s^hiri kris^hnə c^həitənə

dasi haibə nam p^həŋzədənə brindabən prapti oik^hərə /

This means that by the blessing of guru, the person who died has been privileged to rechristen as /s^hri kris^hnə cəitəinə dasi/ and thus became the servant of god Krishna.

- 6) After the advent of Hinduism, in performing ceremonies and rituals Hindus are supposed to be assisted by Brahmin priest. Priest who act as intermediaries between

worshippers and god in temples are known as /puzari/ in Hindu religious tradition. The same word is borrowed in Meiteiron, but the meaning of /puzari/ has been entirely changed as it refers to only the Brahmin who cooks for ceremonial feast.

7. Formation of Hybrid Compounds

(a) /mandop-k^hənbə/ ‘the process of constructing the mandop’

/mandop-k^hənbə/ is a hybrid compound from Sanskrit word /māṇḍapa/ ‘a pillared outdoor hall or pavilion for public rituals’, but the word is naturalized as /mandop/ or /mantop/. Even though this word is originally from Sanskrit it may apparently be derived from Bengali as it is revealed in the pronunciation of /mandop/ where /a/ becomes /o/. Where /μανδοπ/ is a pillared hall or porch fronting a Hindu temple and also a temporary platform or scared tent used for Hindu wedding or other religious ceremony. Whereas /k^hənbə/ is a derived noun in which /k^hən/ is the verb root which means to cover and /-bə/ is the nominal marker which means the process of constructing the mandop. In Meitei society /mandop-k^hənbə/ is a very religious process, as such an auspicious day has to be fixed before a religious rituals or a ceremony. On that day a Brahmin will fix a particular time and he will lay the first pillar then the construction will be continued by young boys and set the temporary tent.

Loanword has proved to be very productive in the Meitei lexicon the same word /mandop/ here, when compounded with another word /məpu/ ‘owner’ gives another hybrid word /mandop-məpu/ ‘owner of the mandop’. An elderly religious person usually is the owner of the makeshift /mandop/ for the religious function to carry out.

(b) /dibos-kətpə/ ‘the feast offered on the next day of death ceremony’

/dibos-kətpə/ is a combination of two words, /dibos/ borrowed from the Sanskrit word

/divas/ ‘celebration’, ‘a day’, ‘morning’, ‘day-break’ and it is naturalized as /dibos /.

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Even though this word is originally from Sanskrit, the word has come from Bengali is visible in the pronunciation where the voice labio-dental fricative is substituted by voice bilabial stop as /dibos/, which means – a vegetarian feast offered to god first and later consumed by the people and /kətpə/ ‘to offer’. But in Meiteiron the meaning of the word is restricted only to the feast offered on the next day of the death ceremony /sorat/ (shraddha) which includes fish curry. However the fish curry is not offered to the God.

According to the Meitei beliefs and practices during the days of mourning that is generally thirteen days from the day death occurs till the /sorat/ (religious death ceremony) the family members and the kin relatives refrain from eating fish or any non-vegetarian food and pan. As a mark of respect and solidarity some of the close friends are also sometimes found to join the mourning of the deceased person by voluntarily prohibiting themselves from eating fish and pan. However, the prohibited food items are resumed with the celebration of /dibos/.

It is important to note that Meitei belief system has a strict code of conduct that if they do not start consuming on this day they would not be allowed to eat such things for the whole year, i.e., till the completion of one year of death ceremony which is known as /phiroi/. But for some people this same ritual is performed without any religious connotation at the night of the /sorat/ ‘death ceremony’ day where fish curry is cooked primarily for the family and its close kin relatives who have abstained from consuming the above said food items. Though not very elaborate the elderly person of the family generally invites the people who have been involved in the process of cremation of the deceased. The organization of the feast is known as /ŋa-təŋbə/ literally ‘to taste fish’ in the local vernacular.

Today with the influence of Hinduism the process is performed more elaborately with religious connotation of cooking vegetarian food to be offered to god and fish curry cooked separately to be consumed by the family, kin relatives and others. This ritual is known as /dibos-kətpə/ ‘to offer dibos’. Thus the contextual use of /dibos/ in the Meitei religious practices is restricted only to this ritual function. These two functions may seem different but they are not different functionally as it is the celebration of resuming the consumption of prohibited items, the only difference one can find is that /dibos/ is celebrated more elaborately with religious rituals and with more invitees on the next day of /sorat/ ‘death ceremony’.

(c) /zətra-təubə/ ‘to start a journey at an auspicious hour’

/zətra/ is a loanword which originally comes from /jatra/ which means ‘procession’, ‘journey’, ‘festive’ or ‘solemn occasion’ in Sanskrit. It is naturalized by the substitution of /j/ with /z/ in Meiteiron, but interestingly the substitution of the sound does not directly come from the Sanskrit to Meiteiron. As seen from the pronunciation of the word it is indeed closer to Bengali /dʒatra/, it is an indirect borrowed word from Sanskrit like many other loan words in Meiteiron. Whereas the word /təubə/ “to do” hence the compound word /zətra-təubə/ means to begin a journey at an auspicious hour. Another hybrid compound used in Meiteiron is /zətra-pubi/ ‘a lady who carries zətra’. The meaning of /zətra/ has been entirely shifted away from its original meaning. Here /zətra/ means a scared pot, full of rice grains exclusively used in marriage context. This scared pot full of rice grains would be carried by a lady who would be leading the marriage procession to the bride’s home. Hence the title /zətra-pubi/ has been assigned to the lady as ‘lady who

carries the scared pot'. It is indeed considered a privilege for a lady to lead the procession with the scared pot on the head.

According to Meiteis, strict customs and practices this lady cannot be any woman but should be the one who possesses certain qualities that she must be a married woman whose first born child must be a boy. In any circumstances a widow, even though the first born child is a son will not allowed to perform this function. On the auspicious day of marriage an auspicious moment that is /zətra-təubə/, in the local vernacular, is always fixed before the ritual and at that particular time once the religious process begins the ceremony cannot be stopped. Another hybrid-compound with the loan word / zətra/ is /zətra-hunbə/ which is a combination of the verbal noun / hunbə / means to plant, but in this context it means the laying of the foundation stone which is also done through a religious ritual, after which the construction of a building will begin. The ritual is strictly performed with the recitation of *mantras* by a bhramin 'priest'. Thus the word /zətra/ is used in different context of Meitei religious ceremonies but meaning of the word remains the same that is, 'the beginning'.

The word /zətra/ is now being used beyond the religious context, even in our day to day conversation for example when a person is to go for a journey in regards of profession, education or medical treatment. However, it is mostly used by elder people as for example,

laijəŋbə cətpəni zətragi puŋp^həm soihəŋənu

'Since you are going for treatment do not make mistake to begin at the auspicious moment'.

(d) /diyuti-okpə/ ‘the religious ritual of welcoming the bride/bridegroom in a wedding ceremony’

The word /diyuti/ is a nativised form, from the Sanskrit word /dipitə/ which means set on ‘fire’, ‘inflamed’, ‘illuminated’. The word is derived from Sanskrit, but the word has most probably come from Bengali, the term might have been nativised from Bengali /diyuti/ because the phonologically it is nearer to Bengali. /diyuti/ means ‘light’, ‘radiance’ and ‘splendor’. However in the Meitei religious context, it is symbolically signified by a collection of three sticks torches which will be held by three persons and /okpə/ is to welcome.

In Manipur /diyuti-okpə/ is a ritual practice in the marriage ceremony to purify the groom from the evil spirit which might have come across on his way to the bride’s home. Three sticks will be held by anyone available, on which the fire will be led and *kabok* (popped rice) will be thrown towards the groom, then the mother-in-law will welcome the groom by embracing with white cloths or *chadar* because the Meiteis believe that white cloths signify purity. So in all the religious ceremonies all the family member will mostly wear white cloths. This ritual is a pagan practice of Meiteis which is known as /meibul-meijao-okpa/ (where /meibul/ means literally collection of fire and / meijao/ means big fire, and /okpa/ means to welcome) but the same ritual is now known as /diuti-okpa/ which suggest the influence of Hinduism. Similar to the Hindu practice to welcome her son-in-law bride's mother welcomes the groom by performing the *aarti* (traditional Indian welcome ritual with a lamp or *diya* placed on a platter or *thali*) and places a *tilak* on his forehead

This ritual is also performed when the bride goes to the groom’s home after marriage, with the same belief. The similar ritual with the similar belief is also practiced

in the Chinese marriage, when the bride arrives at her new home the bride is subjected to a ritual treatment – the flashing of mirrors, purification by smoke – that brings her as free as possible of the evil adhering to her. [Rites and Duties, or Chinese Marriage: 267].

(e) /prəsadi-k^hunbə/ “to pick the remnants of food offered to god”

Like any other hybrid compounds the first word is always a loanword in the compound /prəsadi-k^hunbə/ too the word /prəsadi/ which came from the Hindi/Sanskrit word /prəsad/, but in Meiteiron it is naturalized by the addition of the sound /i/ which means divine food which has been offered to idols and the remnants of such food, favour, kindness and purity. / prəsad/ as a whole is the remnant of any kind of food which have been offered to god such as fruits, sweets etc. In the Meitei religious context the meaning of the word /prəsadi/ restricts its meaning only to the remnants of the food that is specially the rice and different kinds of vegetables, where /k^hunbə/ is a Meiteiron means ‘to pick up’. The word/ k^hunbə / also means the process of picking the food and eating it too.

As according to the social norm ‘God’ is a superior almighty which cannot be equalized with man in anyways, so we human pick up his remains and do not take directly. The word therefore, signifies not only of taking of the food, it also means eating of it too. It is considered as an honorific word. Thus it is apparent that the Meiteiron does not use words such as- */prəsadi-ləubə/ where /-ləubə/ ‘to take prasad’, thus it is considered inappropriate to use in the Meitei religious context because Meiteis have a belief that we humans are the devotees of god. And god is the superior almighty, Meiteis use the word /-ləubə/ in a causal way in everyday conversation. Similarly another word */prəsadi-cabə/ which means ‘to eat the prasad’, is also not used as it is considered very ordinary to use

in anything connected with religious rituals. Because /-cabə/ which means ‘to eat’ is an ordinary word which is used whenever they communicate with each other, like the word /ləubə/ ‘to take’ as mentioned above.

(f) /kəina-kətpə/ ‘marriage without much elaborate rituals’

A compound word formed by a loanword / kəina/ is naturalized from the Sanskrit word /kənjə/ which means a ‘girl’, ‘daughter’ and ‘bride’ or ‘a women in general’, but in Meiteiron the meaning is restrictedly used for a bride. Here the medial cluster of the loanword is nativised with the process of metathesis where the /j/ has preceded sound in the naturalized form, whereas /kətpə/ in which /kət/ is the verb meaning ‘offer’ and /-pə/is the nominal marker, together which means ‘the act of giving the bride to the groom. Meiteis do not have a word as such */ nupi-kətpə/ which can be a similar act of /kəinə-kətpə/. The word /vʊpi/ generally means the girl or the women. So, if we use */nupi-kətpə/ it will be very inappropriate in the Meiteis culture, it may mean like offering of every female. It can be probably said / kəinə-kətpə/ is one of the customary way of declaring a man and woman as husband and wife with minimum religious rituals of marriage. There are certain circumstances where the religious ritual of / kəinə-kətpə / takes place.

Generally, in the olden days, clan exogamy was very strict that intra-clan marriage was prohibited. Those who broke clan exogamy were not allowed to undergo formal marriage which is known as /luhɔnbə/. The only option left for those men and women was the ritual of / kəinə-kətpə/.

Another situation of / kəinə-kətpə/ worth citing is when the parents are poor and they cannot afford to spend much money that they decide that the man and woman undergo

the ritual of /kəinə-kətpə/ instead of formal marriage. Such kind of marriage is usually performed in rural parts of Manipur till now. Such kind of marriage also takes place when the parents are against the wishes of their children. In such situation, as per a social norm it is considered as humiliating, which demeans the self-esteem of the family. So in order to hide such circumstance the religious authority is not even informed. Thus the most elaborate ritual of marriage is substituted just by blessing by a relative. Another situation where the ceremony of /kəjna-kətpə/ may be performed is, for example, when a married man marries a girl or a married man marries a divorcee or a widow.

What emerges from the discussion is that the meaning is restricted to ‘marriage without much formalities’. It seems that before the advent of Hinduism, Meiteis did practice a ritual of a simple type of a marriage ceremony where a married woman was offered to a man. It is not an elaborate ceremony, but in accordance to the religious beliefs in every marriage ceremony in Meitei community it is believed that god witnesses the marriage ceremony. In other words, it assumed that he is there as a witness. With the changes in the society the ritual is now known as /kəjna-kətpə/ which shows the influence of Hinduism in the language use.

For Meiteis any kind of marriage was usually called /luhoŋbə/, so in the Meitei lexicon we do not have words like /nupi-kətpə/, but with the influence of Hinduism the semantic value of such ritual is filled by the compound word of a loanword /kəina/ and a native word /kətpə/.

8. Conclusion

It is generally agreed that the entry of loanwords in a language from other language correlates with acculturation and cultural diffusion (Lehmann 1962:216). The adoption of

Hinduism has tremendous impact on Meiteiron. The influence of Indo-Aryan words especially Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit on Meiteiron enriches the lexical words of Meiteiron. Many Indo-Aryan words entered the Meitei lexicon, through cultural assimilation, for example, the usual expression used when a person dies in Meiteiron is /sik^hre/ ‘he/she died’ or /ləik^hidre/ ‘he/she is no more’. But after the advent of Hinduism the same expression sik^hre/ ‘he/she died’ is expressed as /bəis^hnəbə-oik^hre/ for a male and /bəis^hnəbi-oik^hre/ for a female.

Meiteiron, as a result of contact with the speakers of Indo-Aryan languages, particularly Bengali, which began from 18th century to the end of the 20th century, reflects a beautiful juxtaposition of the two religious values and still sustain to practice the pagan beliefs. Keeping traditional practice became a way of preserving a cultural identity in a society. Such juxtaposed culture is also clearly visible from the language the Meiteis use, the formation of different hybrid-compounds for example /kəina-kətpə/ ‘marriage without much elaborate formation’, /prasadi-k^hunbə/ ‘to pick the remnants of food offered to god’. Thus cultural influence leads to influence on language which subsequently leads to the entries of loanwords. These loanwords certainly enrich the lexicon of Meiteiron. However, speakers must caution themselves that the excessive use of loanwords may not be a wise attempt as this may endanger many Meiteiron vocabularies.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:9 September 2013

Sorokhaibam Heloise, Ph.D. Scholar and N. Pramodini, Ph.D.

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