



RANI-PHEE: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF HAND-WOVEN TEXTILES OF MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

Rani phee is made by silk found in the state of Manipur. It depicts the sign of royal swirl of Meitei community of Manipur. Rani-manao (Junior Rani) and Rani-phee (Full Rani) are the different classes of Rani-phee. Production process such as used of loom, design development, types of silk used for fabrication and its cost of production were estimated. Results revealed that majority of the weavers used both fly and throw shuttle loom for production of Rani-phee. Production rate of Rani-manao was found to be higher than Rani-phee as it is a small version of Rani-phee made in a single piece of cloth. Increase in the production of Rani-phee as handloom textile could enhance the knowledge and opportunity to the women to increase their social status in and outside the state.

Keywords: Throw shuttle loom, Fly shuttle loom, Rani-Phee, Rani-manao

Introduction

Manipur in northeast India is a small beautiful state with Imphal as its capital. The word 'Manipur' literally means 'Jewel of India' has a geographical area of 22, 327 sqkm and is situated at altitude of 790 metre. Manipur are broadly classified into two regions namely, hilly territory and valley territory, which has a sizeable ethnic group, follows Hinduism and reside in the valley areas of the state¹ with their own unique traditional textiles. The state is blessed with green lush beauty and is surrounded by blue hills valley. Moreover, agriculture is the main mode of living of the people in Manipur. After agriculture, the important industries of Manipur are handloom and handicraft which is a main source of income

especially for the women of state. However, the status of women is still nowhere near a satisfactory level. Therefore, much emphasis is given to women's right and promoting their welfare. During post independence, the women weavers had made a remarkable contribution to the handloom cooperative society. It undertook various functions such as production, provision of raw material, inputs, sales and common services. The main handloom products of the state which had demand inside and outside the state were saris, bed sheets, curtains, towels, table cloth with intricate designs, cushion covers, pillow covers, upholstery, draperies, scarfs, chadders, woolen shawls and lungies (Directorate of Commerce and Industries 2002:4)^{2,3}. In olden days, each and every household in Manipur had a loom on which the womenfolk weave the cloths for her family. The tribes originally in hilly area wove their traditional textiles on the loin-loom where women in plain area prefer both loin loom and fly shuttle loom for manufacturing of woven textile product⁴.

Among all the textiles, the term '*Ina-phae*' derived from two words *ina* and *phae*. *Ina* means to cover or to worn over and *phae* means a cloth. *Ina-phae* are generally woven in two separate pieces which are then joined together to form one full *Ina-phae*. Alternatively, *Rani-phae* is an *ina-phae*, the woven shawl made by silk filament. *Rani-phae* was introduced by a weaver of Wangkhei Ms. Chungkham Rani. She popularized the version of *Rani-phae* with silk threads, using modern dyes and produced diverse motifs to the traditionally cotton *inaphea*⁵. *Rani-phae* are classified into two types *Rani-manao* (Rani Junior) and *Rani-phae* (Rani full). *Rani-manao* is a piece of woven silk cloth which has width of 36inch to 38inch and has gained immense popularity amongst the youth whereas *Rani-phae* is a silk woven cloth (40-44inch) made by joining of two piece of woven silk cloth in the centre. The cloth of Rani, is a vital part of every Meitei woman's wardrobe and in fact, her life. So, every woman worth her name knows about '*Rani-phae*' thus it is necessary to study the details about cost of production of both the *Rani-phae* as it began experimenting with silk threads, dyes and designs.

Methodology

Selection of village: Present study was conducted in three village's viz., *Nambol* (village A) *Phubala* (village B), *Naransenna* (village C), of Bishnupur District, Manipur.

Collection of information: A structured interview schedule was designed with open and closed ended questions. Question related to the general information of weavers, weaving process with respect to the looms, yarns, motifs and colour used in preparation of *Rani-phae*

and its production rate. Total hundred and fifty samples (50 weavers from each village) were studies for the present investigation.

		
Plate1a	1b	1c
Plate1. Production of <i>Rani-pee</i>		
		
Plate2a.	Plate2b.	Plate2c.
Plate 2. Implements used in weaving of <i>Rani-pee</i>		
		
Plate3a.	Plate3b.	Plate3c.
Plate 3. Variegated design of <i>Rani-pee</i>		

Results

Study revealed that majority of the weavers were age of 35 to 55 and who were *Meitei* (Hindu) live mostly in extended family of Kaccha and semi pacca house with spacious loom shed (Plate 1). Table 1 opined that 40 per cent of weavers of village A used fly shuttle loom,

34% used both fly shuttle and throw shuttle loom for production of *Rani-pee*, followed by throw shuttle loom (13%).

In general, majority of weaver i.e., 65% of weavers used both fly shuttle and throw shuttle loom for production of *Rani-pee*, followed by throw shuttle loom (54%) and fly shuttle loom (27.9%).

Table 1. Looms used in weaving of *Rani-pee*

Village	FS	TS	Both FS&TS
A	20 (40)	13 (26)	17 (34)
B	10 (20)	25 (50)	15 (30)
C	11(22)	16(32)	23 (46)
Total (150)	41 (27.9)	54 (36)	65(40)

Note: FS- Fly shuttle, TS- Throw shuttle

It is highlighted from the fig1. that, 90 per cent of weavers of village A created own designs and motifs for fabrication of *Rani-pee*. However, 10% of weavers used traditional motifs. In village B, 70 % of weavers used innovative design and 30% used the traditional pattern. However, 86% of weavers in village C used innovative design and remaining 14 % of weaver used traditional design in production of *Rani-pee*.

In general, 82% of weavers were used innovative design for making *Rani-pee*. Although, 18% of weavers used traditional design with different color combination.

In addition to the traditional motifs, natural motifs such as flowers, birds, animals, along with the popular motifs viz., lotus, peacock, swan, *kundo* (Downy Jasmine) and *khongamelei* (Orchid variety) were used by the weavers for designing of *Rani-pee*.

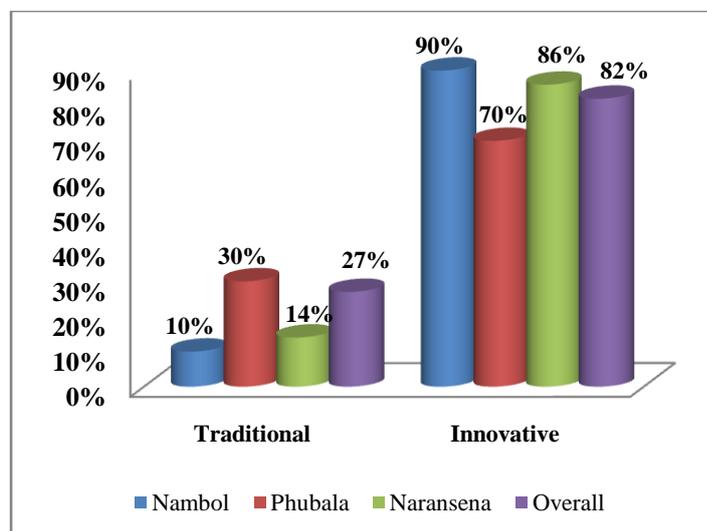


Fig 1. Motifs used in *Rani-pee*

It is apparent from the Table 3 that 80.66% weavers were used mulberry for weaving of *Rani-manao* than *Rani-pee* (60.00%). Similarly, 76.66% of weaver used maximum of tassar silk for construction of *Rani-manao* than *Rani-pee*. However, 94.00% of weaver was used muga for fabrication of *Rani-pee* than *Rani-manao* (12.66%). On the other hand, maximum of weavers (73.33%) weaved *Rani-manao* by using eri silk than *Rani-manao*(26.66%).

Table3. Silk used in production of *Rani-pee*

Types of <i>Rani-pee</i>	Mulberry	Tassar	Muga	Eri
<i>Rani-manao</i>	121 (80.66)	115 (76.66)	19 (12.66)	110 (73.33)
<i>Rani-pee</i>	141 (94.00)	85 (56.66)	90 (60)	40 (26.66)

In general, among all the silk, mulberry silk (80.66%) were used for the production of *Rani-manao* followed by tassar (76.66%), eri (73.33%) and muga silk (12.66%). However, majority of the weavers (94.00%) used mulberry for designing of *Rani-pee*, followed by muga (90.00%), tassar (56.66%) and (26.66%) respectively.

Results found that, *Rani-manao* with simple design was produced in 2 days at the rate of Rs 1500, however simple *Rani-pee* was made in 7 days and the cost was found to be Rs 5000. It is also indicated from the table that *Rani-manao* with intricate design was produced in 5 days

at the rate of Rs. 2500 to 4000. Although, simple *Rani-pee* with intricate design was produced in 15 days at the rate of Rs. 9000-15000.

Table4. Production rate of one *Rani-pee*

	<i>Rani-manao</i> (Days of production)		<i>Rani-pee</i> (Days of production)	
	Days	Cost (Rs.)	Days	Cost (Rs.)
Simple/ Without design	2	1500	7	5000
Intricate Design	5	2500-4000	15	9000-15000

Discussion

Findings of the present study explained that majority of weavers used both fly shuttle loom and throw shuttle loom for fabrication of *Rani-pee*, followed by throw shuttle loom and fly shuttle loom respectively. As use of both the looms could increase the production process, also save time of weaving process.

It is also highlighted from the results that majority of the weaver used innovative design on preparation of *Rani-pee*. Because weavers sought to explore the modified pattern that were created by themselves with different colour combinations. And weaver also believed that introducing of innovative motifs may not affect to the traditional design motifs.

Results of the present study stated that, among all the silk, mulberry and muga silk were used for fabrication of both *Rani-pee* as mulberry and muga silk are easily procured from the market and could easily dye with different colour combination.

Production rate of *Rani-manao* was found to be higher than the *Rani-pee* as *Rani-manao* is a smaller version of the *Rani-pee*, similar in size to the Indian *chunni* or *dupatta* and was woven in a single piece. Designing of this woven fabrics is a less time consuming process and was not found to be labourious. Therefore it is necessary to develop a plan cluster programme for the weaver to improve their livelihood security. Besides, development of handloom sector would give employment opportunity to the women of Manipur. Women being socialized in weaving could enhance their knowledge resulting in the increase of their social status in the state.

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