

Chapter 3

Forest Management in Manipur during Colonial Period

This chapter looks into the history of forest management in Manipur. It focuses on the traditional forest management under Manipur State as well as by the hill people of Manipur. It also looked into the changes which had taken place with the coming of colonial regime in the State. Forest Management means the organization and control of an enterprise or undertaking. In this study, forest management refers broadly to the organization and control of, access to and utilization of trees, woodlots, plantations and natural forests, and associated resources, including the benefits derived from them or from their productive, extractive or industrial enterprises. The colonial government tries to control the Indian forest and framed policy emphasizing on State control over forests and to meet State revenue demand in India.

The Forest Department

Prior to the year 1861 the business connected with the “Forest” was dealt with in the Home, as well as in the Forest Depts. On 4 April 1861, the subject was taken over by the Public Works Department in its newly created Revenue-Forests Branch. The Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce Department were created on 6 June 1871, and the subject was transferred to this department in its Forest Branch. The Home, Revenue and Agricultural Department was constituted on 1 July 1879, and the Forests Branch came under the purview of this dept. the Home, Revenue, Agricultural Department was bifurcated into two separate departments on 6 July 1881, viz., i) Home Dept., and ii) Revenue and Agricultural Department, and the Forests Branch was taken over the latter. The Revenue, Agricultural Department combined with the Education and Health Dept. on 16 April 1923 to form Education. Health Dept. Lands Department and Forest Branch continued to function in this dept. In 1932, the subject “Archaeology” was transferred from the Education Branch to the Forest Branch.

In 1938, the work connected with “Municipal Administration” of New Delhi was transferred from the Health Branch to the Forest Branch. In the same year, the

subject “Land” was also transferred from the Lands and Overseas Branch to the Forest Branch, and in consequence the Forest Branch was renamed as Forests and Lands Branch in 1939.¹ On 1 September 1945 the education, Health and Lands Dept. was trifurcated into three separate departments.., viz., (i) Education Department, (ii) Health Department and (iii) Agriculture Department, and the Forests and Lands Branch was transfer to the latter, and re-designated as Forest Section.² The British Indian government announced its first forest policy by a resolution on October 19, 1894. All the management strategies, principles of scientific management and creation of institutional framework in the form of a forest department to carry out these objectives were clearly geared towards a single goal: the augmentation of revenue generated by the British Empire. The people residing in the forest, their livelihood concerns, conservation and protection of forests and wildlife, none of these issues were of any concern to the Empire at that time.

There can be no doubt that there is still a source of wealth in the forests which clothe the hills, especially in the west where the annual rainfall is at least three times as great as that of the hills on the east of the valley. There is or was a fair amount of wild rubber.³

The Colonial (British) rule India and in Manipur in particular, created an organised forest department, a systematic inventory of trees carried out, customary rights of people over forest land and produce curtailed and transformed into concessions to be enjoyed at the will of forest officials and the most important, forests became a major source of revenue for the government. Today, we realized forest is the precious gift of our mother earth as it considered to be a “National wealth” reserved for providing subsistence to our growing millions population. It provides renewable natural resources both of direct and indirect benefits towards men and of other living organisms. We realized forest as a “foster mother” of all living organisms that it played a vital role in supplying food fodder, cheap fuels for cooking purposes, to the rural population at their doorsteps, raw materials for industries and

¹ National Archive of India, *Revenue Agriculture Education, Health Land, Guide to the Records Part IV*, Home Department (R.R), New Delhi, p. 59.

² National Archive of India, *Revenue Agriculture Education, Health Land, Guide to the Records Part IV*, Home Department (R.R), New Delhi, p. 60.

³ T.C. Hodson, *Naga Tribe of Manipur*, p. 56.

other materials for adverse uses. Also it becomes one of the major sources of income to the rural and tribal people else whilst.

The Indian society was conscious of the adverse environmental effects caused by deforestation and extinction of animal species (e.g., the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* prohibited the cutting of trees, punishment for such acts), the best suited of connection is the Asoka Pillar Edicts represent the respecting and preserving environment, forests and wildlife). “One cannot be truly human and civilized unless one looks upon not only all fellow men but all creations with the eyes of a friend. Emperor Ashoka defined a King’s duty as not merely to protect citizens and punish wrongdoers but also to preserve animal life as forest trees”.⁴ The medieval India however made no attempts on forest conservations were the great lovers of nature and took delight in spending their spare time in the lap of natural environment.

Forest Laws

The modern period of British India and the aftermath shown several laws related to environment (like, the Shore Nuisance) Act of 1853, the Oriental Gas Company Act of 1857, the Indian Penal Code of 1860, the Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act of 1905 and the Bombay Smoke Nuisance Act of 1912). In the year 1980, the Forest (Conservation) Act was passed for the conservation of forests and to check on further deforestation.⁵ The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981 was enacted to implement the decisions made at the Stockholm Conference. In the wake of the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Government of India enacted the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.⁶ In spite of active passage of laws numerous countries, human intervention itself were reshaped the natural environment in its own image. The Colonial governments often enacted forest and water (environmental) laws which often extract for the commercial purposes mostly the forest products in Manipur in particular.

Early Resource Management System

The course of changes took place from the traditional trading commodities (before

⁴ Gandhi, Indira, *Safeguarding Environment*, p. 13.

⁵ M.I, Laskar, & Rajesh Shah, *An Approach to Man and Environment*, p. 25.

⁶ M.I., Laskar, & Rajesh Shah, *An Approach to Man and Environment*, p. 25.

the British colonial) and the colonial period in Manipur. Despite the fact that agriculture was the predominant occupation of Manipur, they had also engaged themselves in an activity of trade within the State as well with other Indian States⁷ and the neighbouring countries like the people of southern China and Burma. However, trade could not flourish in the early days due to self-sufficient economic system, under-developed means of road and transport systems and absence of proper and regular market system etc. in order to regulate the commercial activities, as early as (558-668 A.D.) Maharaja Ura Konthouba introduced a 'bell metal coins'⁸ as medium of exchange. In the hill areas, people mostly traded on buffaloes, cows, mithuns, dogs, fowls, poultry, earthen pots, wooden tobacco pipes, mortars, plates, mugs, cane baskets, mats, rain proofs, etc.⁹ their agricultural produces were exchange for goods like beads, spear, clothes, etc. from the Meiteis of the valley.¹⁰ The Nagas also traded with the jungle products such as bee-wax, tea seeds, black resin, ores, elephant tusks, etc. They also travelled to the valley to acquire crude gun powder from the Meitei traders who learnt the art of manufacturing the Chinese merchants who visited the State during Khagemba in 1630. The Rongmei tribe live in the western range of the State also took with them domestic fowls and surplus agricultural produce of their fields such as cotton, ginger, orange etc. to the Imphal and Cachar bazaar for bartering with luxury articles and salt.¹¹

The ancient period of Manipur happened to be on the trade routes between South Asia and South East Asia. The State had developed trade relationship with the then neighboring countries of Assam, Tripura and Lushai Hills (Mizoram). With Assam, the first contact was made during the reign of Kabomba (1523-1542 A.D.) who was one of the successors of king Kyamba, as early as 153 A.D. a trade route was opened to upper Assam and besides exchange of marriage. There was also trade between people of Manipur and Cachar. The business were by means of and land route There were 3 (three) routes to Cachar through which the traders moved their

⁷ Assam, Cachar, Lushai hills, Tripura, Naga Hills etc.

⁸ "The size of 2-anna piece, the present value is 1/4th of a rupee, and as batter is the mode of trade, there is very little money in circulation". See also, Maxwell, *Diary*, Political Agent of Manipur State, Manipur State Achieve, Imphal, 1891, p. 5.

⁹ H. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁰ W.H.G. Cole, *Tour Diary of the Political Agent of Manipur for the month of February*, p. 1.

¹¹ R. Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur*, p. 18.

merchandise. The tribes living along the routes brought down their agricultural goods to Cachar bazaar and bartered them for salt, dao and spear.¹² There was also trade between Tripura and Manipur especially during Khagemba's time whose influence was extended over Cachar and northern Mizoram.

The trade with the Burmese it may be stated that the Manipuri traders used to brought buffaloes, ponies and bricks from across the border etc. through three land routes. Bricks trade was the most popular during the reign of Maharaja Labanyachandra (1798-1801 A.D).¹³ Commercial ties with-Burma was brought closer and further developed during the reign of Marjit Singh. During his time silk was exported to Burma. However, such a cordial relationship could not last as a misunderstanding developed between the two Kings.¹⁴ As regards Manipuri trade link with China, merchants of far Yunan Province of China visited Manipur in 1630 bringing with them goods like silk, paper, tea, etc. and carried back home commodities like wax clothes, cotton, ponies, etc.¹⁵

Traditional Forest Management and the Environment in Manipur

The forests and lands provide livelihood to man as well a close relationship between with his environment. A large number of people depended on forest for their particular way of life. The principal forest produce of Manipur consist of timber and firewood. In the valley the pine trees was the chief wood used in building houses.¹⁶ The Manipur under Maharajas (pre-colonial period) the State neither controlled nor scientifically managed the forests land and no records of collecting revenue from the forests. The principal forest produce of Manipur consists of timber and firewood.¹⁷ Besides, "communal" or "community" "the people living in one place, considered as a whole" or "a body of people living in the same place under the same laws" (Webster's Dictionary). The sense of wholeness or jointness is at the root of the meaning of community. It helps answer just who is

¹² R. B. Pemberton, *Eastern Frontier of India*, p. 3.

¹³ Gangmumei, Kabui, *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*, Vol.1, p. 221.

¹⁴ Marjit Singh king of Manipur once allowed his subject to cut trees in the Kabaw valley and the act off ended the Burmese king Bagyidaw who invited him to attend the ceremony of installation of the king. But Marjit Singh (king Manipur) did not attend it on some excuses. Subsequently Bagyidaw dispatched army to seize him and with that, the trade between the two countries was suspended.

¹⁵ R. B. Pemberton, *Eastern Frontier of India*, p. 3.

¹⁶ ARM, 1916 -17, p. 10.

¹⁷ ARM, 1919 - 20, p. 9.

included in a particular collective management system.

On the other hand "community" implies a "whole" people living in one place or otherwise together, "communal" means "between different groups in a community" (Oxford). Community refers to an entire village, town or other socially and usually spatially bounded unit, while communal implies restricted membership, access or distribution of benefits to sociologically discrete parts of a community. Castes, ethnic groups, tribes, clans, chiefdom-ships or lineages, or religious, political or socio-economic groups or factions (e.g. peasant organizations) are the examples of communal groups. A communal entity is a readily definable, existed within a larger community forest management were practiced in hill tribal areas that decisions were made on the basis of communal (e.g. lineage, clan or caste) or community (village-or Panchayat-based) decision making. The tribal systems of forest and water management were mostly community managed and with locally available materials.¹⁸

Under the traditional forest management system the king appointed number of various staffs of different categories of forest to keep records of different forest produces in the State during the pre-British rule. The pre-colonial Manipur State had a separate *Urungba Loishang* (Forest Department) and it was supervised by the *Urungba Achouba* (Chief Forest Officer). He was assisted by his three official staffs:

- i. the *Umang-loi Hanjaba*,
- ii. the *Umang-loi Hidang* and
- iii. the *Khoirungba*.

The duty of *Umangloi Hanjaba* controlled and fixed the quality of trees and bamboos. He would keep a record of places where valuable trees and bamboo grew in different forest of Manipur. The *Umangloi Hanjaba* he was the authority in charge of issuing permission for cutting trees and bamboo.¹⁹ The *Umangloi Hidang* was the assistant to *Umangloi Hanjaba*. He had to see that the orders of his superior officer were duly executed. The responsibilities of *Khoirungba* were to prepare

¹⁸ *Personal Communication*, K. Kameichei.

¹⁹ Ibobi, N. Singh, *The Manipur of Administration 1709-1907*, S. Manglem Singh Publication, Imphal, 1976, p.117.

schemes for reading revenue from honey and wax.²⁰ He was assisted by a number of men whose main function was to search for bee hives.

***Urungba Loishang* (Department of Forest)**

The *Urungba Loishang* was in charge of an officer, *Umangloi Hanjaba*. He was also designated as *Urung-purel* (Chief Forest Officer). Under the *Umangloi Hanjaba* there were five officers: *Imingloi Hanjaba*, *Khoi-rongba*, *Hiru-Hinao Lakpa*, *Urungba Paishuba* and *Phen-dei Urungba*.²¹ The *Imingloi Hanjaba* kept records of all kind and qualities of trees growing in the forest. The *Khoirungba* was in charge of bees, honey and wax. He searched for bee-hives in the forest and took honey for the king. The *Hiru-Hinao Lakpa* was responsible for providing the State with such articles as ivory, tiger's teeth, hides and nails, deer and the like, tortoise and oysters also to select trees for making boats. The office of *Urungba Paishuba* had to bore the surface of drums, to design *Khamen-chatpa*, to make *Kairel Kaijao*, to make looms, couches, wooden sandals, *Kaptreng* (cotton-squeezing instruments), hockey-ball, holders of axe, spade and sword.²² When these things were made, they were given to the office of *Phendel Urungba* for polishing. It's seen that the people of Manipur did not exploit the standing forest other than the domestic uses of timber or woods. Prior to the colonial intervention of Manipur forest, the State itself provides to maintain the forest produces, even if, it may not seen identical as seen to the western countries (based on scientific method of forestry). However, since 1891 this system (traditional forest) of management was no more mentioned during the colonial period in its place they introduced a new a form of forest management system.

Colonial Forestry and Rise of Commercial Forestry

The colonial rulers had neglected the forests and their conservation during their early period also they did not have a definite forest policy in India in general. However, in 1840 they promulgate an ordinance in order to control over the forestland by the Britain's Asian colonies (India) as Crown Land (Encroachment) Ordinance. That includes all forests, wastes, unoccupied and uncultivated lands to

²⁰ Ibobi, N. Singh, *The Manipur of Administration 1709-1907*, p. 117.

²¹ Ibobi, N. Singh, *The Manipur of Administration 1709-1907*, p. 117.

²² Ibobi, N. Singh, *The Manipur of Administration 1709-1907*, p. 117.

the crown. The changing attitudes of the British towards the forest and the people who used them will thus understand the account of the origins of forestry. The practices of colonial forestry were largely an outgrowth of the revenue and strategic needs of the empire. Therefore, in 1864 an Imperial Forest Department had established in India. The British control over the State's monopoly over Indian forests was first asserted through the Indian Forest Act of 1865. This law simply established the government's claims over forests.

Besides, the British colonial administration then enacted a further far-reaching Forest Act of 1878, thereby acquiring the sovereignty of all wastelands which in its definition included all forests.²³ This Act also enabled the administration to demarcate reserved and protected forests. In the former, all local rights were abolished while in the latter some existing rights were accepted as a privilege offered by the British government to the local people, which can be taken away if necessary. These colonial laws brought the forests under the centralized sovereignty of the State. As mentioned earlier, prior to the British colonial rule the traditional mode of commercialization of forest resources didn't undergo in any form with the neighboring countries neither had they exploited the forest resources (timber for revenue) nor have the definite forest resource policy (scientific management) during pre-British Manipur (1891).²⁴

It also divulged that commercial exploitation of the teak forests along the border was begun only after the British occupation of the State in 1891. And thus, the contrast between the harmony in the pre-colonial trade in Manipur and the intervention of colonial British, trading commodities were drawn too sharply to be convincing. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, forest resources were utilised only by the Manipuri people and were not subjected to commercial exploitation. Sooner after the British assumption of political power in 1891 in Manipur, they prepared the policies of conserving the State forest resources for

²³ Social Sciences Text Book - IX, Board of Secondary Education Manipur, Imphal, 2008, p. 57.

²⁴ *The Survey Report on the Distribution of Bamboo Species in Manipur*, Forest Department Government of Manipur, Imphal, 2000, p. 11.

commercial activities.²⁵

Instead of maintaining ecological balance and protecting the environment by preserving forest resources, they leased the forest for the highest bidder. Further, the colonial policy on forest extensively curtailed the right of the forest-dwellers (over forest) in Manipur by classifying the forest into different categories and various Acts (forest) to meet their requirement. And their mode of production was disturbed and their economic conditions deteriorated over the period. Colonial government in several conditions disrupted the forest-oriented tribal economy by imposing a Forest Acts, which deprived them of their common property rights.

Colonial Intervention of Manipur Forest Conservation

The British colonial introduced the methods of conserving the forest resources to exploit for the commercial purposes. Their conquest extensively brought a plunder of natural resources of the State. With little indifference towards environmental protection “if the rich resources of this forest (Cachar Border) were judiciously worked, the State could get as much as Rs.4, 037/-,” as the forest revenue even before proper management on the forest begun in 1891- 92.²⁶ They, therefore based on the fact as the Assam government used to impose ‘protective duty’ on the timber brought down from this forest to Cachar, Mr. Maxwell (the Political Agent) pointed out that the duty was purely an 'unfair burden' and 'more unjust' to Manipur. He, therefore, proposed to the Assam government, for abolition of the duty and further suggested that the forest be placed under the management of the Deputy.²⁷ While the authorities were engaged in prolonged negotiation, the forest remained almost unharnessed during which the forest revenue that the State government used to received had registered a rapid decline. In order to revive the denuded forest areas re-forestation scheme was initiated in 1939 by planting pine, teak, Laburum, Jarul, Jecaranda, Bauhenia and Pareng, Tairen, etc. Jiri forests and the other State reserve forest of the State especially the valley overlooking forests. There were some drawbacks in managing the colonial State forest management in Manipur at the early intervention of the colonial authority. In order to work-out from the

²⁵ N. Lokendra, Singh, *Land Use System of Manipur Hills*, (ed.) Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 1976, p. 85.

²⁶ ARM, 1891- 92, p. 9.

²⁷ ARM, 1892- 93, p. 6.

limitation they appointed forest officers to check the fluctuated State's forest revenue from time to time. Also assigned them the forest officers, to take surveyed so also to submit their report to the British government about the Manipur State forest. The following are the reports submitted by the forest officers:

Maxwell's Proposal on Manipur Forest

However, the sharp decline of forest resource revenue alarmed the State. Maxwell once again renewed his efforts for improving, the management of the forest. He discussed with Mr. Barrett, B.F.O. of Cachar at Silchar and put forth the proposal for opening up of the State forest to the public for commercial exploitation so that the Manipur State might be able to realised more revenues. But the later refused to do so fearing that such a move could result in a considerable loss to the forest department of Assam.²⁸ Maxwell then reminded the Assam government of his earlier proposal of 1892 stating that it was high time for the government to formulate a definite forest policy. He further suggested that the Cachar forest officer might charge 25% of the gross receipts to meet expenses of administration and the remaining 75% should be given to the State of Manipur. The policy was accordingly approved in 1898 for an initial period of 3 (three) years.²⁹

The arrangement of the new policy of border (lost of forest resource) was to be managed by the Deputy Conservator of Forest of Cachar. Soon after approval of new the agreement between the State and Cachar, the Conservator of Forest of Assam wanted to revised some of the provisions in good turn for the government of Assam on the ground that the shared for the government of Assam was too small. And, therefore, a proposal to raise the proportion of the State was submitted. However, the idea was opposed by Maxwell on the ground that the former had not spent anything on the preservation of the forest (i.e. maintenance, fire protection, watch and ward and improvement) and exploitation of the Manipur State forest reports from 1898 to 1905 also indicated that Assam State also impressed upon the Government of that no change was required and at last, both the States agreed that the agreement of 1898 be continued till time when the need for modification arose. Therefore, Deputy Conservator of Forest of Cachar was allowed to go ahead with

²⁸ ARM, 1896 - 97, p. 7.

²⁹ N. Lokendra, Singh, *Land Use System of Manipur Hills*, p. 87.

the initial scheme of the management of the Manipur forest.

The Political Agent of Manipur (A.E. Wood) reported that the increase in the forest revenue was because of more exploitation of timbers which can be found with no trouble also which were very easy in transportation because it's much closer to a larger river in the region. But still, the revenue generally came to declined due to exhaustion of the timbers in all the accessible forestland. The colonial authorities however kept silent in the matter consequently it resulted to worst in the next six years of 1905-06 -1913-14.³⁰ From 1908-09 and 1910-11 the State reserved forests sight a slight increased of revenue. This slightly increased of State revenue was due to the following:

- a) clearance of jungle by settlers on the banks of the Jiri and Barak rivers, causing greater facility in withdrawing timbers from the interior part of the forests
- b) the increase in the demand of timber from Cachar and
- c) collection of large amount of revenue by the forest authorities of Cachar on the produce removed from Manipur [W.A. Cosgrave, Vice-President of Manipur State *Darbar*].

The increased and decreased of forest revenue had however affected the State revenue and thus the colonial authority tried to improved the Manipur State reserved forests by appointing the forest officers in the following:

Mr. Robowthem's Forest Report

The increased of State revenue also had detrimental effects on the forest, for no restriction were imposed on the extraction of trees. And thus in order to check this process of over-exploitation the colonial authority assigned Mr. Robowthem, the Forest Service of Assam was deputed on the request of Manipur government to prepared report on Manipur forest based, to formulate definite forest policy as necessary thereon.³¹ For the systematic working of forest he therefore, began to work the policy by associating with Mr. Perru, the DFO of Cachar over the scheme.

³⁰ ARM, 1904 - 05, p. 11.

³¹ ARM, 1910 - 11, p. 11.

Thus, with the help of Mr. Perru (himself) the scheme was prepared and submitted to the Assam government for the necessary consideration. He (Mr. Perru) suggested Mr. Robowthem to formulate the government to spend a little but would it should ensure a permanent source of revenue to the State was the sole suggestion.

Mr. Robowthem however had a careful field assessment for about a year and submitted his report to the government in 1912 with the following recommendations:³²

- i) the local government should forgo import duty
- ii) Manipur forest should be managed by the Assam Forest Department
- iii) the State *Darbar* should increase the expenses of management and
- iv) the State *Darbar* should levy the same royalty products, in Manipur as in Cachar.

The Manipur State *Darbar* however not prepared to improve the expenditure on forest management as proposed by Mr. Robowthem in his report. Mr. Higgins the President of Manipur State *Darbar* opined that the objectives to expand the exploitation and uses of the timber was rather than to raise its costs. He called for an urgent need to protect the Cachar border forests but the scientific management gone to otherwise. It further suggested, rapid denudation of Manipur forest would lead to devastating flood in the Surma valley. In order to avoid such calamity in near future, the government of Assam was asked to bore the half of the expenses for the forest management.³³ As a result of these developments their recommendations were kept in pending instead the old system of working (previous years) were carried on.

Mr. A. J. W. Milroy's Report

Instead of working on Mr. Robowthem forest report on Manipur forest management, it kept on pending because of the above drawbacks, instead the colonial authorities once again requested the Government of India to depute an officer of Imperial Forest Services to the Manipur State. Now the local government

³² D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, 1930, p. 5.

³³ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, p. 6.

had to withdraw the request as the State revenue did not have the capacity to bore the burden in 1912-13. In the meantime, the State authorities restricted the timber traders with regards to the place of working and size of trees to be felled. Realising the situation Sir Archedale Earl, Chief Commissioner of Assam tried to make better in managing and to introduce workable forest system Manipur. Subsequently, in 1913 A. J. W. Milroy of Imperial Forest Service, who was also the Conservator of Forest of Assam, was deputed to prepare a report on Manipur forest and also draw up a scheme for working the forest on systematic and business like basis. After looking at the system, he suggested in his report, the forest destruction had been over exploitation due to the routine absence of supervision.

He made this remark, 'no forest can flourish under such a system and no industry can rest on a sound basis when the raw material is harvested in such a wasteful manner'. He said these should be introduced as forest will be the source of considerable and steady income both to the State and to the Hillman inhabiting that locality. He, therefore, put forth the following proposals:

- a. State should have an European Forest Officer in its Forest Department
- b. the State should levy the royalty as in Cachar but that could be altered only with the permission of government and
- c. a system of rotational cutting of trees.

Outcome of Milroy's Report

However, Mr. Milroy proposals were criticized by Mr. Perree, the then DFO of Cachar that the Mr. A.J.W. Milroy' report was found some short of difficulties to work out with the following:

- a) not define the responsibility of the Conservator of Forest of Assam
- b) no arrangement had been suggested for carrying on the work in case of State Forest Officer breaking down in health and
- c) rate of pay proposed was too small to undertake the work and responsibility involved.

Based on the above critic observations the recommendation of Milroy's report was kept in pending. The outbreak of the First World War was over, therefore, arrangements had been made later than in 1898 and resulted of setting up a separate

forest department in Manipur. The matters associated with the management of forest tolls, grass mahals, orchids, bee-wax and others including the salt wells of both the valley and hills were now transferred to the newly created department. Followed by appointing Mr. Lairenmayum Iboongohal Singh, as the Additional Member (the first local forest member) of the State *Darbar* and his court received a 44 legal cases³⁴ related of his department for immediate disposal.

Manipur Forest Conservation Policy under British Colonial

Some of the important forest reserves created under the aegis of the colonial State may be useful to know the role of colonial State in starting and intervening in the management of forest resources in the State. The State Reserved Forests in Manipur during their period became more interested and thus the expansion works for new State forestlands were taken up by the colonial government. The following are the State Reserved Forests in Manipur during the colonial period:

Cachar Border Forest Conservation

The Cachar border forest was situated within the latitude 24°-26° N and longitude 93°- 94° E of Manipur. It's scattered all over the western hill covering two hill districts of Manipur i.e. the Tamenglong district in the north-west and Churachandpur district in the south-west. This forest confined to a narrow halt of trees along the Barak River and its tributaries, vis. - Jiri, Tuivai, Irang, Leimatak and Makru. Jiri River forms a part of the western boundary of this forest. The width of this belt of forest is 3 kms. to 5 km, sometime it's a narrow as below 1 km, and sometimes the halt disappears altogether. The area of this forest was calculated 5828 sq. kms. The soil of this forest is clayey loam. At times, there are large boulders which cover the hills making the extraction of timber from this forest extremely difficult. Semi-green type forests are also found in this forest. There were vast tracts of multi-bamboo forest intermixed with these forests. Some of the main tree species which found in this forest were as follow:

- a) *Adina sessifolia* Somari, A large deciduous tree
- b) *Adina cardifolia* (Haldi or Haldu, B.). A tall deciduous tree, mod is light

³⁴ ARM, 1931- 32, p. 26.

yellow

- c) *Acer niveum* (Sundi, B) A large tree, good wood for planking
- d) *Alhitila lebbek* (Moroi, B: Khok). A large deciduous tree. wt. 19.07 kg/cft.
- e) Used for heavy furniture and panelling
- f) *Alee Daphne owdenii* (Til Sundi. B). Tree is moderate tired. Timber very much prized, meet fee all purposes
- g) *Artocarpus chaplasha* (Cham. B; Helrukothong. M.) large tree, mod-yd lot to brown, moderately hard, varies ornamental, wt. 15.44 kg/cft. used for furniture, turnery, carving. Large supplies available
- h) *Artocarpus hirsute* (Dewa, B; Heirukokthong, M.), Tree large, Hardwood-light brown, wt. 16, 8 kg/cft. as good a teak
- i) *Anthocephalus kadaaba* (Kadam, B; Keli, M.), Large deciduous tree, wood-soft, bark used as tonic
- j) *Aquilaria agalloeha* (Agar B; Agor, M.). A tall evergreen tree, highly scented wood used as incense, commanding high price. Oil distilled from the wood is sent to Europe and China
- k) *Bonbax matabaricua* (Seoul, B; Tera. M.). A large deciduous tree called Indian cotton, wt. 10.44 kg/cft. extensively used for match splints
- l) *Blichopia javonica* (Trae name is Bishop Wood, Jokior Urium, B; Uthum Narobi, M.). Wood is dull red, 15.89 kg/cft. polishes well, very durable under water, used in posts, makes good rail Sleepers after treatment and
- m) *Callophyllum inophyllum* and species. (Tailo. B; Salaiman. M). Wood-ornamental, reddies brown, wt. 18.6-21.8 kgs/eft. very food furniture wood.

Initially, the Colonial State of did not much favour of taking over this Cachar/Jiri Manipur forest unless the report on forest found gain for the State , as stated in the

Manipur State Darbar Resolution No. 8.8.33 as following:³⁵

The Darbar have heard Mr. Kaith's exposition of the present condition of the State Forests, and of the advisability of retaining a Forest Officer.

The Darbar agree that the main outlines for the future development of the forests as expounded by Mr. Kaith are good. Before coming to a final decision on this, they wish however to consider Mr. Kaith's report, on the result of his years investigations. This report has been not yet submitted.

On receipt of this report, it will be decided whether to approach Government with the object of taking over the Jiri Barak forests from government, and on the result of this will depend the question of organising a State Forest Department with a qualified F.O.

However, the colonial administrators pointed the rich of resource mostly the timber and suggested if this forest be taken over by the State and managed judiciously, the State could get a great income of revenue.³⁶ The following tables will show the colonial State received from this Cachar forest:

Table: 2

Revenue Receipts of Cachar Border /Jiri Forest

| Sl.No. | Year | Revenue |
|--------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. | 1892-93 | Rs. 4,037 |
| 2. | 1896-97 | Rs.1,118 |
| 3. | 1898-99 | Rs.1,977 |
| 4. | 1899-1900 | Rs.30,201 |
| 5. | 1904-05 | Rs.39,051 |
| 6. | 1905-06 | RS,13,363 |

³⁵ MSD, 1933, p. 22.

³⁶ ARM, 1891-92, p. 9.

| | | |
|-----|---------|------------|
| 7. | 1908-09 | Rs.25,597 |
| 8. | 1909-10 | Rs. 23,401 |
| 9. | 1910-11 | Rs. 29,682 |
| 10. | 1911-12 | Rs. 19,795 |
| 11. | 1912-13 | Rs.16,733 |
| 12. | 1913-14 | Rs.12,816 |

Sources: Administrative Report of Manipur State (Corresponding years), Manipur State Archive, Imphal

Table: 3

| SL.No. | Year | Revenue (Rs.) |
|--------|---------|--------------------|
| 1. | 1915-16 | 12,424/- |
| 2. | 1916-17 | 11,795/- |
| 3. | 1917-18 | 8,677/- |
| 4. | 1919-20 | 16,578/- |
| 5. | 1921-22 | 31,451/- |
| 6, | 1923-24 | 17,599/- |
| 7. | 1924-25 | 3,982/- |
| 8. | 1926-27 | 36,259/- |
| 9. | 1927-28 | 48,441/-(57,878/-) |

| | | |
|-----|---------|----------|
| 10. | 1929-30 | 20,912/- |
| 11. | 1930-31 | 80,035/- |
| 12. | 1933-34 | 10,786/- |
| 13. | 1934-35 | 11,808/- |
| 14. | 1936-37 | 12,848/- |
| 15. | 1937-38 | 16,284/- |
| 16. | 1939-40 | 25,052/- |
| 17. | 1940-41 | 37,880/- |
| 18. | 1942-43 | 25,784/- |
| 19. | 1944-45 | 31,752/- |
| 20. | 1946-47 | 77,752 |

Sources: Administrative Report of Manipur State (Corresponding years), Manipur State Archive, Imphal

From the above tables shows the State revenue receipts of 1892-1947 up and down from time to time from this State Reserved Forest. The slight increased and decreased of the State revenue be the results of timber extraction. The increased of the State may be of the clearance of jungle by settlers on the banks of the Jiri and Barak rivers, causing greater facility in withdrawing timbers from the interior part of the forests; b) the increase in the demand of timber from Cachar and c) collection of large amount of revenue by the forest authorities of Cachar on the produce removed from Manipur. However, the increase of forest revenue had detrimental effect on the forest (no restriction imposed on the extraction of trees) and this directly resulted to destruction of environment.

Burma/Myanmar Border Teak Forest Conservation

This forest lies along the Indo-Burma border i.e. extreme east along the international border with Burma/Myanmar on the foothills of Kabow valley along the Burma border around the Tamu Township of upper Chindwin district. The Kabaw valley of Myanmar marks the eastern border of these forests. It extended over an area of 900 sq. kms. It's a long belt of tree forests all along the Myanmar boundary. The width of this tree belt varies sometimes 1.6 kms., sometimes 3 kms., and sometimes disappears altogether in places. The most valuable resources of these forests were Teak trees, also known these forests as name "Burma Teak Forest" the richness of Teak tree. In addition this forest was found abundant the minor forest produces (like thitsi, garzan, eng. oil, muli, Oak and bamboos).³⁷ The major forest produce of this forest were mostly the teak. This teak timber was mostly exported to Assam, Calcutta and England for the purpose of railway bars and shipbuilding industries.³⁸ On the other hand, the minor forest produces were locally consumed in the Kabow and Tagoon itself. The management of this forest began at early part of 1860s. The exploitation of teak forest along the border forest began of 1897-98.³⁹ The Government of British India after the Revolt of 1857 sent Mr. Schlich (Government Forester) to supervise teak exploitation work in this part of the empire.⁴⁰ The government prepared to extract the teak forest with the forest revenue did not meet the lost in terms of revenue and spoiled valuable forest so advice for technical. The exploitation of this teak forest began with the agreement signed between the British colonial Manipur Government and the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation of Rangoon 1910.⁴¹ The agreement was signed⁴² between the British colonial Manipur Government and the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation of Rangoon in 1910. The prices were fixed at Rs. 3, 50 per ton,⁴³ with due record to the whole of the Commissioner by Lt. Governor of Burma.

³⁷ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, pp. 97-101.

³⁸ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, p. 99.

³⁹ ARM, 1397- 98, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Padhi, G.S., *Forestry in India, A Critical Study*, International Book Distributors, Dehradun, 1992, p. 42.

⁴¹ Before, the Burmese collected an amount of Rs. 4/- on a ton of teak trees, and Rs. 4/- all other reserved timbers floated down the Chindwin river into Burma

⁴² To levy an import duty of Rs.3/- per teak tress by the Burmese government.

⁴³ Lal, Dena, *British Policy towards Manipur*, Imphal, 1984, pp. 51- 52.

After signing the agreement between the British colonial Manipur Government and the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation of Rangoon in 1910, the process of commercialising the border teak forest of Burma immediately began. The revenue received from the following year were amount to Rs. 2 (two) Lakhs.⁴⁴ Since then, collection of revenue annually from the Burmese villagers of the Kabow valley came to start for the first time.⁴⁵ In that way, this forest was left at the mercy of the Corporation (Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation of Rangoon). Thereby this Burma teak forest was over exploited. The declining of State revenue receipts marked the sign of over exploitation from this forest. The table 4 below shows the declining figures of revenue receipts of the year 1916-1921 as follows:

Table: 4

Figure of Revenue, Burma Border Teak Forest

| Sl. No. | Year | Revenue (Amount of Rs.) |
|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 1916-17 | 16, 816 |
| 2 | 1917-18 | 67, 217 |
| 3 | 1919-20 | N/A |
| 4 | 1920-21 | 19, 846 |

Source: Administrative Report of Manipur State, Correspondent Years

The table No. 3 shows the rise and fall of State revenue returned. The State revenue gone upto Rs. 67, 217 in the year 1917-18 and the great declining of revenue in the year 1920-21 to Rs. 19, 846 as mentioned this declining of State revenue receipts were due the over exploitation it resource from this forest.

⁴⁴ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, p. 107.

⁴⁵ As revenue from the said Corporation besides the tax of Rs. 45/- to Rs. 50/-.

The Langol, the Khuga and the Heingang Forest Conservation

The Langol, the Khuga and the Heingang forest were the important forests which found within the Overlooking valley or within the valley of Manipur under British India.⁴⁶ The important resources of these forests were timber, pine wood, fire-wood, thatching-grass, canes, orchids, deer-horns, etc. These forests were surveyed and declared as protected forests under the category of State Forest Reserve by the Indian Forest Act of 1878 by the Colonial India; this resulted to curtailing the rights of the Manipur indigenous people and the forest-dwellers in particular.

Figure: 3



Photo: The State Langol Reserve Forest (Overlooking the valley Imphal), during Colonial British, 1938.

In the year 1938, Maxwell the Political Agent of Manipur declared the Langol hill forest as State Forest Reserve forests.⁴⁷ This declaration included all forests situated all over the hill facing the Imphal river valley and its tributaries. However, this State reserve forest just taking over by the colonial government, were began to extract most of the trees of this forest (timber) for the State revenue return. The resources of this State reserve forest were left un-extracted the portions which found difficult for transportation (bad roads condition to reach by bullock cart) was the only way which put away from timber total exploitation. The other portions of

⁴⁶ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, 1930, p. 111.

⁴⁷ ARM, 1894- 95, p. 14.

this forest were extracted by the means of bullock cart, buffaloes, elephants and even manual labour. The timbers were transported to the main commercial centres of Imphal, Sekmai, Moirang, Bishempur, etc.⁴⁸ The colonial authority knew the increase of State income in the form of revenue from the new forest policy; they encouraged expand the timber project to become more increased the revenue from these forests reserve. This increased of State revenue resulted to take over more forest as State reserve.

In the year 1894 another new State reserve forest was taken over by the colonial State and this forest was named the Heingang Hill Forest which was declared as the State Forest Reserve which was a few miles from Imphal town.⁴⁹ These forests resource endowed a great attractive amount of income to the State, which Mr. Maxwell in his administration report of 1896-97 described the capable of producing a very considerable revenue for the State revenue income from these reserve which continued to contributed a great share of revenue.

Mr. C.S Muller, the President of Manipur State *Darbar* made a proposal for the immediate formulation of definite forest policy in the State, by seeking advice from the expertise. The management of these reserve forests in and around the valley in 1919-20 for the State forest revenue flatly declined (see the declining amount in the revenue section in table No.1) in the year 1921-22 because the forest State revenue were decreased unexpectedly. Actually this proposal was to prevent this fluctuated State revenue in future. On the other hand, the efforts Mr. C.S Muller was to stop the fall of colonial State income not exactly to make more efforts to conserved the denuded forest. The extraction of fire-wood were prohibited and further he suggested the villagers to plant trees to replaced all of those earlier which have been cut down by the colonial government. As a result, the over-exploitation almost stopped getting revenues from these reserve forests from 1927 to 1939.

The Ukhurul Pine Forest Conservation

The Ukhurul pine forest itself was confined in the Ukhurul district of the Manipur State. Large quantities of pine trees were grown in this forest. The altitude of these

⁴⁸ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, 1930, p. 111.

⁴⁹ ARM, 1894 - 95, p. 14.

forests varies from 1219.20m. (400ft.) to 2438.40. (8000 ft.) above the sea level. The volcanic type of rock in origin, and tertiary and cretaceous type of rock were also found in this forest. The soil of this forest is sandy loam to clayey loam. Pine trees were found in abundance in this forest it also found some other valuable like oak trees and mixed evergreen trees (Bossum Champa, Chesnut, Khasi-pine) that growth by themselves or naturally in the forest.⁵⁰ Till the year 1896 this Ukhhrul State reserve forest was not practically exploited in any form mostly for commercial purposes. However, these forest was opened for commercial exploitation by the State Public Works Department (P.W.D.) for the time and extracted about 18,000 cubic feet of pine woods at a value of Rs.11, 000/- and about 66,000 cubic feet of firewood.

These trees have been cut for construction of houses, making of furniture, and for fuel and lighting purposes in 1897-98, by the colonial government.⁵¹ Gradually this forest was exploited for different purposes and led to over-exploitation. Thus, the then Political Agent of Manipur proposed, for closure of all the denuded pine forests the forests might again regenerated itself. He also proposed for fixation of the minimum size of logs to be felled so that only matured ones might be extracted with elephants and buffaloes. The proposal was put into practised, and the experiment resulted to a considerable diminution in the extraction of pine from the Hills bordering the southern valley. On the other hand, the extraction work of timber in this forest was put to halt in the hill areas of Manipur in 1919-20 by the outbreak Kuki-Rebellion because it gave hampered their work and restricted their movement.⁵² The extraction work of this Ukhhrul pine State reserve forest were stop completely of this period. However, the colonial government never ends these trends of extraction, it continued in other State forest reserves those State forests found in the valley. This Ukhhrul pine State reserve forest for pine timbers was once again resumed when the above said rebellion came normalised in the year 1919-20.⁵³

⁵⁰ D.C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, p. 111.

⁵¹ ARM, 1897 - 98, p. 8.

⁵² ARM, 1919 - 20, p. 9.

⁵³ ARM, 1919 - 20, p. 9.

The Sugnu State Reserve Forest Conservation

The Sugnu forest is located in the hill district of Chandel Manipur State in the southernmost part of the State bordering the Myanmar. Naturally growing trees were found in abundance in this Sugnu's State reserve forest. As mentioned, the outbreak of Kuki-Rebellion hampered the extraction work of timbers in the hill's forest. Therefore, the colonial government changed the policy to look at the other forest which found nearby the valley, turned the attention towards the pine forest in the over-looking the valley of the State.⁵⁴ Trees of this forest were extracted as much as possible or put to indiscriminate felling by the colonial British. The policies to take over more forestland for the colonial State forest reserve were the very much efforts of the British colonial. Search for the new site for the State reserve forest were conducted often by the colonial authority from time to time by demarcating and claimed the forestland as State Reserve Forest.

In the year 1939-40 the boundaries of Sugnu pine forest were further expanded. In these ways, the indigenous people forest rights were also curtailed. One after another the British colonial claimed over all the forestland laying near the valley as well as the forest in hill too. Hence, the Heingang and Kambung forest were declared as State Reserve Forest simultaneously.⁵⁵ Extraction of trees from this forest were in excesses to such an extent that all the accessible pine forests near Sugnu had been denuded, and this forest was made over to the village with an instruction to plant saplings in the hills. Along with this, plantation was also carried out in Chingkheiching, Kangchup and Kanbung.⁵⁶ In 1939-40 the colonial authorities in the meantime put an effort to reserves the forest and re-demarcated the boundaries of the pine reserves to regenerate at the southernmost extremity of the valley so as to include a small area in which are good pine trees were found standing.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ ARM, 1919 - 20, p. 9.

⁵⁵ ARM, 1934 - 35, p. 19.

⁵⁶ D. C. Kaith, *Forest Report of Manipur*, p. 111.

⁵⁷ ARM, 1922 - 23, p. 6.

System of Selling the Forest Produce

The forest produce of the State were sold in given the following system:

- a) by auction (the timber and poles which were generally sold through auctions),
- b) tender allotment and
- c) permit system.⁵⁸

The monopoly right to extract timbers from each block was given to different contractors. The sale of forest produces by public auction in this system involved the leasing of forest blocks to registered forest contractors for extraction of timbers under certain terms and conditions prescribed by the Government. The contractors had to make a security deposit and the minimum and maximum amounts of timber to be extracted were also fixed. They were required to bid in a public auction and the highest bidder was given monopoly right to extract forest produces from a block for a first period, generally three years. Royalty on forest produces were time subject to revised according to the prevalent market rates. Timbers were sold by categorizing the quality of the wood as fuel wood trees (assumed less valuable in value) and valuable trees, such as Uningthou, Leihao, Tairel and Na-U were dealt with separately by the forest authorities.⁵⁹

The contractors pay royalty plus monopoly fees to the government. The permit was issued by the forest member of the Manipur State *Darbar*. The Reserved forests were sold by auction in the month of August every year.⁶⁰ Besides the timber business, the thatching grass overlooking the valley Imphal, where an area grasses were found growing (fit for sale) also sold by leasing out to the contractors. Thus, the traditional rights of the indigenous people to use unreservedly of forest produce were at the hand of the rich and influenced contractors.⁶¹ The right was with the President of Manipur Stats *Darbar*. This losing of traditional rights by the indigenous people resulted to conflicts with the leases and the villagers.

⁵⁸ MSD, 1936, p. 16. See also *Manipur State Gazette*, Manipur State Archive, Imphal, 1933, p. 3, and ARM, 1938 - 39, p. 11.

⁵⁹ MSD, 1946 - 47, p. 12.

⁶⁰ MSD, 1915 - 16, p. 11.

⁶¹ MSD, 1915 - 16, p. 11.

At the time of fall of forest revenue receipts the authorities even offered an assistant in the form of loans to continue the commercializing mostly, the timber. The *Darbar* prepared and asked to allow the Forest Officer (in consultation with the Divisional Forest Officer, Cachar), to give loans to certain reliable contractors, if they can be found, up to a limit of Rs. 6.000, for the immediate working of forests. These arrangements were to be made by the Forests Officer and the Assam Forest authorities.⁶² Besides, some well-defined areas were also leased out to traders on payment of definite installment on definite date with a view to help the timber traders (*Darbar* sanctioned Rs.250/- for removal of boulders from the stream which caused obstruction to the extraction of the timber).⁶³ Under the management of Deputy Forest Officer (DFO), timber merchants and traders made a pressing rush for exploitation of the matured and valuable trees. As said, the main objective of the authority was only to secure the 25% share of the tax paid by the State for the supervisory role in the management of the forest. The DFO of Cachar was instructed by the Assam government not to work for the improvement of the forest except the work of collection of royalty. The rights of the local people in their own forest were at the mercy of the contractors. This can be seen from the resolution of Manipur *Darbar* No. 16.8.33 as follows.⁶⁴

Agreement for Timber Working. 1. Considered P.A'S Memo No.691 M.S. of 24.5.33 forwarding copy of letter No.1384 of 19.5.33 from government of Assam Forest Branch with a new separate draft form of timber agreement for the Manipur State.

The *Darbar* accept the draft, except as regards the works within the British State in section 11, the contractor must be held responsible for damage done to the crops etc. belonging to Manipur villages as well as British villages, the omission of these work is desired.

Forest Toll Tax and the State Revenue

Collection of taxes from the forest produces were done through a number of toll stations which had been established at different places on all the routes leading to Imphal town. The Hill Office was created in the early 1930 and with this creation,

⁶² MSD, 1933, p. 86.

⁶³ MSD, 1923 - 24, p. 12.

⁶⁴ MSD, 1933, p.28.

certain forest areas were put to auction for collection of revenue, by creating mahals in the Assam Style, but there were certain difficulties in operating these mahals. The revenue collection was then through the toll stations opened near the foothills or just outside the town area of Imphal. In this connection, J.C. Higgins, the Vice-President Manipur State *Darbar* reported that a few stations were established by the *Darbar* resolution (No. 7R of 14.11.31) as follows:

Forest Tolls 4, Forest Member's Report on D.R. No. 7R

Regarding toll fees to be levied on the timber etc. extracted from the Heingang Forest. Resolved that toll fee may only be levied on wood etc. actually passing through the toll gate or down the river.⁶⁵

Also, the colonial authority made framed numerous forest policies to put on managing the fluctuations of the State revenue from time to time as follows:

- i) imposition of a higher limit of cutting down trees i.e., 4/6 at breast height;
- ii) felling of even the immature trees by the unscrupulous timbers traders and
- iii) removal of boulders from a stream which caused obstruction to the extraction of timber etc.

The northwestern forests (Cachar border) were more or less destroyed to the maximum advantage of the colonial ruler. For instance, the colonial ruler (Manipur) received a handsome return of Rs. 25,106/- which was against the expenditure of Rs.66 after sharing the revenue of 25% of the total forest revenue to the Assam government (1898-1932). Steps were also taken by the Political Agent for effective peaceful extraction of timbers two *Lambuses* with strict instructions were posted in the Jiri border forests area to avoid the strained relation between the local people and the timber traders.⁶⁶ And thus forest revenue gradually increased in 1933-1935 to 1946-47. Besides, the authorities received revenue from the Burma border teak forest with the good amount revenue of Rs. 67,217/- in 1917-18.

⁶⁵ MSD, 1931, pp. 28-29.

⁶⁶ ARM, 1894 - 95, p. 14.

In 1944-45, a total sum of Rs. 1,477/- was collected in the Langol Reserved forest alone. Furthermore the hills forest received, an amount of additional receipts realized of Rs. 2,760/- in the year 1944. The colonial authority only looked for the revenue increment, the Political Agent of Manipur (Maxwell) in 1896-97 reports “the State forests..... are capable of producing very considerable revenue” and further talked of more revenue if fully exploited.⁶⁷ Despite, the revenue of minor forest make frequent fluctuated receipt, the colonial authorities looked into, for the increased of revenue since of their intervention of Manipur forest. In the year 1916, the State realized a sum of Rs. 4,930/- as revenue from this minor forest produce. Gradually, this resulted to lost traditional rights on their own forests by the people of Manipur. Besides of these timbers the colonial authority received revenue from minor forest produces in this connection the *Darbar* of Manipur State pointed out:

In addition to timber and firewood extracted from the State forests 27 maunds of bee-wax, 20 maunds of agar and 13 seers of elephant task were imported by the lessee of the monopoly right of trade in these articles.⁶⁸

Even if, the fact of decreased of the minor forest produce receipt, the authorities created more mahals in 1935-36 (151 grass mahals) both in the valley and the hill.

To avoid opposition from the villagers the State *Darbar* fixed the rate of monopoly fees in consultation with the Hill Office, and make sold to a particular village on whose land the grass was grown. But, the colonial authorities with thoughts and divisive policy kept the mahals under the category of 'Unclassed State Reserve'⁶⁹ in order to make the ownership appeared to the mahals with the villagers themselves. The colonial authority however failed to checked the over-extraction from the above system (auctioned the hands to grass-Mahals) led to a 'grass-famine' in 1936-37,⁷⁰ which was also add a fuel to the fire by the incessant rain during the year. In view of the fact, the colonial authorized to prohibit the villagers to take settlement in certain areas of grass-mahals mostly in the valley areas to meet the heavy demand for the grass in the late 1940s. Even, the first phase of the State Reserved

⁶⁷ ARM, 1897- 98, p. 7.

⁶⁸ ARM, 1919 - 20, p. 9.

⁶⁹ ARM, 1935 - 36, p. 17.

⁷⁰ ARM, 1936 - 37, pp. 13 & 14.

Forest (Cachar Border Forest) the British colonial received handsome amount of money from State forest revenue as shown in table: 3.

There was an enormous increase in forest revenue, the receipts under this head amounting to Rs. 23,597, as against Rs. 16,031 (1908) in the previous year, while the budget estimate was only Rs. 7,000. Thus, the destruction of forest was the boon for the colonial State. On the other hand, this increment of forest revenue may be mainly due to the clearance of jungle by settlers on the banks of the Jiri and Barak, causing greater facility in withdrawing timber from the interior of the forests, it seems probable that there must have been an increased demand for timber in Cachar.⁷¹

Conclusion

The British colonial commercially exploited the Manipur forest of the State to the maximum advantage. The foremost thing was to collect percentage royalty paid by the Manipur Government (without investing any money for the conservation of the State Reserved Forest). The forests were left unexploited with only the difficulties means of road and transportation system. The extractable forest resources were exploited by creating a number of State forest reserves, which were again leased out to the different contractors. The colonial State carry out a afforestation scheme to some extent in some part of the State's reserved forest but the operation of forest resources by the State were judged against the degree of its exploitations. The revenue from the above mentioned forests were obtained from the extraction and yield value of the forest products. These forest products were disposed of by auction, tender allotment and permit system. The timbers and the poles were generally sold through auctions. After the World War I, the trade on timber increased to a great extent and the State revenue receipts as well. The effort to regenerate over the over-exploited forest products were taken up. The policy to renew the forest areas by re-forestation scheme for instance at Chingkheiching Kanchup, Kangbreng (1939) as well as the Jiri forests planting of pine, teak, Laburum, Jarul, Jecaranda, Bauhenia and Pareng, Tairen, etc.⁷²

However, these efforts were judged against the budget and investment. Again, the worst part pictured from the colonial State was the method of extraction with no

⁷¹ ARM, 1909-10, p.25.

⁷² ARM, 1928 - 39, p. 11.

technical advice⁷³ of teaks trees also a great lost which can't be repay for even after a thousand years to recover from its lost and the destruction of environment. It's seen that, conservation in the context of colonial were partly misnomer because the conservation of Manipur State Forest were for the source of considerable and steady income for the colonial State rather than preservation. Therefore, the processes of 'conservation' were for profit making and the forests were over exploited by the colonial.

⁷³ M. Bhattacharya, *Gazetteer of Manipur State*, Anushilan Press, Calcutta, 1963, p. 21.