



Satyamala Devi: the most blessed Manipuri princess in 18th century-Southeast Asian & South Asian history

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Article Info

Received: 19 May 2026
Accepted: 20 June 2026

Citation: Sorokhaibam, M. S. (2026). Satyamala Devi: the most blessed Manipuri princess in 18th century-Southeast Asian & South Asian history. *Journal of Geo Research*, 1(3), 73-80.

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.21930328



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In the year 1748 Maharaj Garibaniwaz abdicated the throne of Manipur and handed it over to his second son Chit Shai and the ex-king resided at Ramnagar, Heingang Ching, where he resided 6 months and then set out along with his niece Satyamala¹ the daughter of Khamlang Pamshaba who was Wangkheirakpa, who hold the charge of Senapati as well to Awa for marriage to the Awa King Mahadhammarajadipati (1733-1752). Khamlang Pamshaba was the younger brother (step brother) of Maharaja Garibaniwaz. Khamlang Pamshaba the father of Satyamala got killed few years back in an unfortunate palace conspiracy. Since then Satyamala was brought up at the Manipur Palace as the real daughter of Maharaja Garibaniwaz. During the time of Maharaja Garibaniwaz Burmese King Mahadhammarajadipati sent Awa Emissaries repeatedly to the court of Manipur King to seek a hand of a Manipuri Princess to make her a queen. During these days king Garibaniwaz thought of giving Satyamala the most beautiful Manipuri Princess of the palace to Burmese king in marriage so that he could reconciled with Burmese King, who is now facing great trouble from the Mons in the south.

Manipur during the time of Garibaniwaz (1709-1748) was at its peak of power through many military expeditions and conquest in the neighbouring kingdoms. His tactics of war were well planned and always successful. None could retaliate against him during his time, that made him the greatest

conqueror as well as a greatest warrior king Manipur has ever produced. There were repeated invasions and devastations in Upper Burma west of the Irrawaddy River by the Manipuri Cavalry under the command of Maharaja Garibaniwaz and the Kingdom of Upper Burma at Awa (Ava) was very much weakened by this invasion from Manipur. Here we may quote from- The Mons: A Civilisation of Southeast Asia by E. Guillon (1999)- "The last episode in Mon history, at last in terms of power, had its origin partly in the events which

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Some of these horsemen who had newly been converted to Hinduism became convinced that if they bathed in the Irrawaddy at Sagaing they would become invincible. These disturbances, which the Burmese court had not been able to quell, considerably weakened the kingdom of Ava.”

During this time Burmese King Mahadhammaraja Dipati sent Burmese emissaries repeatedly to the court of Manipuri king to seek the hand of a Manipuri princess (see Royal Chronicle of Manipur: Cheitharol Kumbaba). Ultimately Maharaja Garibaniwaz sent princess Satyamata Devi as Awa Leima in 1749 and she became one of the queens of Mahadhammaraja Dipati, the last king of Toungoo Dynasty and titled as “Maha Devi”. Her son Khura Letpa was titled- Minye Sithu (Nwe Ni Hlaing-2015).

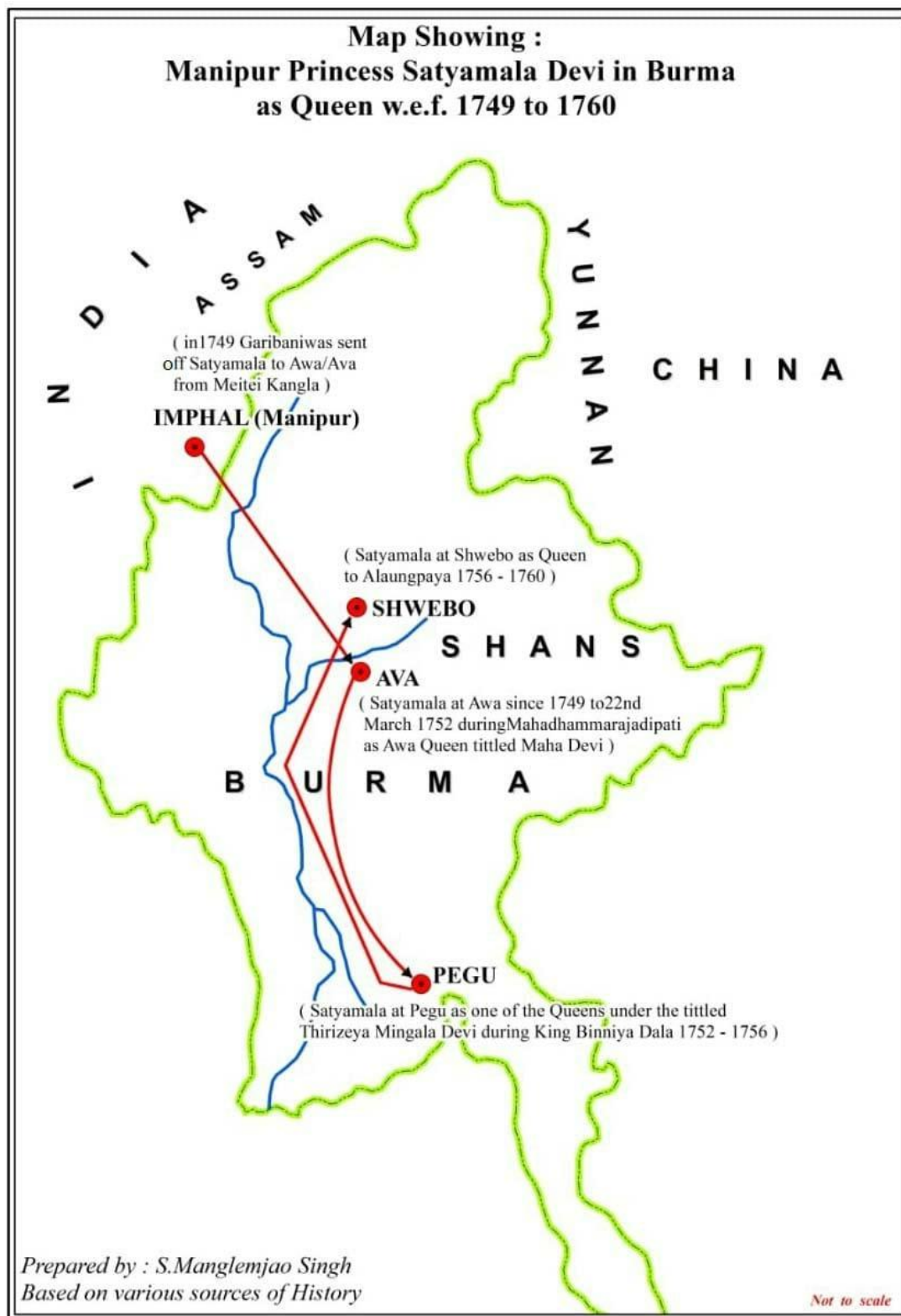
The later periods were the most difficult time in the history of Manipur . The ex-king Garibaniwaz on his returned journey from Awa he received a news from Awa(Ava) Palace that there was a rebellion by Koi Tribes slightly north of Myedu in north Upper Burma and the Burmese King requested Garibaniwaz to fight against those rebellious tribes. He fight those Koi and bring peace in the area.

Upon his return to Manipur, he was expelled by his son Chit Sai in 1750, and he went back to Awa but no help received from Awa king as the Burmese kingdom was under attack from Mons, with great disappointment he returned to Manipur again but was mercilessly killed by the forces of Tollen Tomba (Satrugan Shai), the youngest son of Garibaniwaz who were sent by Chit Sai near Tonphang on Ningthi River (source: Meitei Ningthourol-Sarangthem Bormani, Page 73).

In the meantime, Mons in the south became very strong and the Pegu Court chose Binnya Dala, an ethnic Shan who hails from Chiangmai as the king of Pegu, and sacked and destroyed Ava in 1752 and hundreds of royal families including the king were deported to Pegu including Princess Popa and Maha Devi and there were mass massacred. But fortunately, “Maha Devi” was not killed but made the queen of Pegu by king Binnya Dala and conferred her the title “Thirizeya Mingala Devi” (Nwe Ni Hlaing 2015: Meitei Kathe Crown Service groups in Myanmar from the earliest times to the end of Monarchial Rule- Journal of the Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science).

This historical period in Southeast Asia was one of the most brutal periods and there were great wars of leadership in Burma and Manipur. Alaungpaya the leader from Moksobo was firm to occupy Ava and he after consolidating his position at his village with 46 village leaders he came down to Ava to fight the invading Peguers (Mons) under the leadership of Binnya Dala.

**Map Showing :
Manipur Princess Satyamala Devi in Burma
as Queen w.e.f. 1749 to 1760**



Satyamala Devi, who had been queen to Burmese King Mahadhammaraja Dipati (1749 to 22nd March 1752) and then to Mon king Binnya Dala (1752 to 1756) who had so fortunately survived the mass slaughter, had again submitted to Alaungpaya on 29th December 1756 as Pegu was devastated by the forces of Alaungpaya. Truly, she was escaped from Pegu along with Mon General Dalaban (Talaban) and she negotiated with the new Burma King Alaungpaya and made Mon General Dalaban as the General of King Alaughpaya and Maha Devi the Manipuri princess later became a queen of Alaungpaya (Konbaung Set Vo. I) (according to Bryce Beemer in his thesis “The Creole city in Mainland Southeast Asia”: Slave Gathering Warfare and Cultural Exchange in Burma, Thailand and Manipur, 18th -19th Century narrated this incidents – “A few years later in 1757, Alaungphaya forces attacked Pegu where it was reported that dead bodies were piled so high at the city gates that residence become trapped inside the wall. Maha Devi was capture yet again and made the wife of the Aluangphaya. Meanwhile, the assassination of Gharib Nawaz had destabilized the monarchy in Manipur).

Thus, Satyamala Devi, the daughter of Khamlang Pamsaba, one of the brother of Maharaja Garibaniwaz, who was Wangkheirakpa became the queen of two kings in successive events of Burma and lastly became a wife or queen of the great king Alaungpaya in 1756 can be describe as one of the *Most Blessed Manipuri Princess*² in the history of Southeast Asian and South Asian.

Alaugpaya after consolidating his positions in Burma, he turns his attention towards Manipur and invaded it in 1758. He started the Manipur campaign on 12th November, 1758 and took the town on 2nd January, 1759 (Royal Order of Burma Prt. III, Page-55).

“In Konbaung-zet Mahayazawin, Alaungpaya is reported explaining that he decided to invade Manipur out of an obligation to his wife, Maha Devi. The Manipuri queen is ‘under my golden foot,’ the king explained, meaning he is responsible for her protection and by extension the peace of her homeland. Therefore, I will capture Manipur and put on the throne a righteous successor.” (Bryce Beemer-2013, University of Hawaii at Manoa)’.

We may see a Proclamation of King Alaungpaya as described in Royal Order of Burma, Part-III on his conquest of Manipur: King Alaungpaya’s Proclamation on Manipur on 12th January, 1759: Alaungpaya, the Most Excellent King, Defender of the Buddha’s Religion, Possessor of Arindama, Lance, Master of White, Red, and Spotted Elephants, Lord of the Golden Palace, Liege of Various Kingdoms in Jambudipa, proclaimed that all lands known as Manipur is annexed to his empire from this day of 12th January 1759 and make to it a lasting record for all generations to come, this proclamation is inscribed on stone. Any ruler over this land of Manipur shall send either his sister or his daughter as bride to his liege lord in Burma once in every three years.

The yearly tribute is as-

10 viss of gold,

100 horses,

500 bows,

5000 arrows with poisoned iron tips and
1000 viss of tree gun.

In the time of war he has to join the imperial army with a force of 2000 men (1000 Horsemen, and 1000 Archers). He shall be allowed to rule Manipur so long as he accepts Burma's suzerainty. But in case he becomes disloyal the Burmese king, may he suffer all the great miseries enumerated below:

The curse of all guardian spirits of the Buddha's Religion,
The curse of all guardian spirits of the Burmese King
The curse of all Hindu Gods
The horrible death of being eaten alive by leopard, lions, tigers and
Ogres on land or crocodiles and sharks
The horrible death of being struck by a thunderbolt
The horrible death of being burnt alive
The affliction of all the ninety six kinds of illness
The affliction of the loathsome disease of leprosy
The inexplicable failures in all trade ventures
The lost of property like water in an ebb tide
The horror of war, epidemic, famine and plunder
The disintegration like salt in a sunken boat.

On the other hand if he remains loyal, may he be healthy and prosperous in this life and in all lives to come and ultimately may he be obtain the bliss of nirvana. This record was inscribed on stone by Thet Shay Nawayatha and the inscription stone was erected right in front of the Manipur palace on 19th January, 1759. (Royal Order of Burma-Part III, Page-54-55).

In the month of Sajibu -'April-May' 1759 Meiteis destroyed one memorial built by Burmese forces to commemorate their victory over Meiteis – Cheitharol Khumbaba 1989 by L. Ibungohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh.

Conclusion (Observation)

While developing this paper there are three important personalities appeared. 1) Garibaniwaz (Pamheiba), 2) Alaungphaya (Aluaungmintaya), the Burmese (Myanmar now) Emperor, and 3) Princess Satyamala Devi

(who was the chief queen, Maha Devi, a Meitei Princess who was sent off by Manipur King Garibaniwaz during the time of Mahadhammarajadipati and became queen to Mon King at Pegu and again to Aalungpaya successively by the grace of god and also by her gifted diplomacy in facing the most difficult events in Burmese (Myanmar) history.

King Garibaniwaz when he abdicated his kingship from the throne in his old age, he was slightly depressed because of some grudges within the palace as well as in the relationship with Myanmar king Mahadhammarajadipati as there were some pending issues of sending a daughter to Myanmar king himself. Now in the Meitei/Kanglei Palace, Satyamala grew up as a very beautiful princess with good skill of horse riding and also with great knowledge of diplomacy in dealing with the Myanma (Burmese) King. To fulfill these incomplete issues, Garibaniwaz set out from Ramnagar (Heingang Ching) on 13th Sajibu (March-April) Monday, 1749 along with Satyamala from his final abode from Heingang (Ramnagar).

Alaungphaya and Garibaniwaz: During 40 years of reign as Maharaja of Manipur, Garibaniwaz overran upper Burma West of Irrawaddy more particularly the entire Mu Valley, the rice bowl of Burma at that time which were repeatedly captured by the Manipuri cavalry men. The important towns which were captured by Manipur King were Myedu, Tabayin, Shwebo and Sagaing, where the largest and most celebrated kaunghmudaw pagoda and killed the in-charge minister of great temple at its gate. After capturing Myedu town, he camped there repeatedly. While camping Manipur King stayed mostly 20 to 30 days in average at Myedu and Shwebo, which is the birth place of Alaungphaya, who was a son of a chief of 46 villages in Mu Valley. While Manipur king operating camping in Myedu and shwebo, Alaungphaya, born in 1714, as a young man had seen the activities of war and the skill of Manipur cavalry (Meitei Sagoltongba Lanmee). He watched the whole drama of war during Alaungphaya's boyhood and he was inspired very much by the activities of Manipur King Garibaniwaz and his cavalry's activities as a son of leader of 46 villages around Shwebo (Shwebo became a district during the colonial period).

While Alaungphaya was on his journey of consolidation of Burma under his arm as well as to avenge against the Mons, he came down towards Hanthawaddy (Pegu). On way he and his men were welcome by the lady who was the earlier the chief queen to Ava (Awa) king Mahadhammarajadipati, the last Tungoo Dynasty King of Burm with a Huge Mon Army under General Talaban (Dalaban). The queen was Maha Devi who was named shyatamala in Manipuri Palace, and was accompanied by Manipur Maharaja Garibaniwaz in 1749 on their way to Awa (see-New Ni Hlaing 2015).

This paper is only an introduction to the scholars who are now eagerly investigation Manipur (India)- Burma (Myanmar) relations for a better future relationship in South and South East Asia.

Conflict of Interest: *The author declares no conflict of interest.*

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