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MANIPUR: A STATE THAT IS FORGOTTEN -CRITICAL ANALYSIS- Piyush Baghel¹**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to provide an objective analysis of the ethnic conflict in Manipur, India, shedding light on several critical factors that contribute to the violence in the region. One key aspect that is explored is the shift in social leadership, which has brought about significant changes in the dynamics of the conflict. Additionally, the clear and urgent needs of the Scheduled Tribe population are highlighted, as their concerns and struggles play a significant role in fuelling tensions.

Another significant concern examined in the article is the apprehension felt by Kukizo regarding the National Register of Citizens. This apprehension further exacerbates the already tense situation in Manipur, adding another layer of complexity to the existing conflict. Furthermore, the article sheds light on the indifference displayed by both the state and central government towards addressing the needs and concerns of the people, thereby² setting the stage for potential outbreaks of violence and historical factor of the violence in state which slowly contribute to current conflict in manipurHistorical narrative unfolds against the backdrop of Manipur's rich cultural tapestry, marked by diverse ethnicities and communities. The paper traces the origins of discontent to the pre-independence era, highlighting how geopolitical changes and administrative reconfigurations contributed to the brewing tensions. The historical account underscores the

¹ Student at Galgotias University

² The diplomate-

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://thediomat.com/2023/08/navigating-the-kuki-meitei-conflict-in-indias-manipur-state/%23~:text=3DMeiteis%2520are%2520mostly%2520Hindus%2520and,long%2520history%2520of%2520ethnic%2520conflict.&ved=2ahUKEwiklZy1peaDAxVqqVYBHS0CcsQFnoECA0QBQ&usg=AOvVaw3ZO9aRGGdRGk8IADELNeXL>

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significance of understanding Manipur's unique sociopolitical landscape in comprehending the conflict's deep-seated roots.

Government responses to the Manipur conflict have evolved over time, reflecting the challenges of balancing security imperatives with the aspirations of diverse communities. The research scrutinizes the efficacy of different strategies employed by the government, ranging from military crackdowns to political negotiations. It assesses the impact of these approaches on mitigating violence, fostering dialogue, or exacerbating tensions.

INTRODUCTION

Manipur, a state in north-eastern India, is spread across an area of 22,327 square kilometres and is home to a diverse population consisting primarily of three major ethnic groups – Meitei, Naga, and Kuki. According to the 2011 census of India, the state has a population of approximately 2.856 million. The distribution of these ethnic groups is quite distinct, with the Meitei people mostly residing in the valleys, which encompass only about 10% of Manipur's vast geographical expanse. On the other hand, the Naga and Kuki communities predominantly occupy the hilly regions of the state.

Over the past few years, Manipur has unfortunately experienced a series of challenging events, characterized by political turmoil, armed insurgency, and communal clashes, among other issues. These circumstances have had a profound impact on the region, and understanding the historical context sheds light on the root causes of violence and conflict in Manipur. Dual forms of oppression – cultural and ethnic – have played a significant role in fueling tensions between various groups residing in the state.

Due to its diverse demographics and complicated history, Manipur has long been a melting pot of various ethnicities and cultures. The tension between the Meiteis, who are the dominant ethnic group in the valley, and the various Naga and Kuki tribes in the hills, has been a common theme throughout Manipur's history. The struggle for dominance and control over resources and political power has often led to violent clashes and ongoing instability in the region.³

³The Hindu- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/profile-on-meiteis/article66847682.ece/amp/>

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The historical context of Manipur also includes its complex relationship with the Indian government. The imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the region has been a source of widespread discontent and has led to allegations of human rights abuses by security forces. This has further fuelled the resistance and agitation for autonomy and independence among various groups in Manipur.⁴

The impacts of these historical and ongoing conflicts have been far-reaching, affecting the social fabric, economic development, and overall wellbeing of the people in Manipur. The youth in particular have been affected, as their opportunities for education and employment have been hindered by the persistent instability in the region.

However, amidst the challenges, there have also been efforts towards reconciliation and peace-building in Manipur. Civil society organizations, as well as local and international initiatives, have focused on promoting dialogue and understanding between different ethnic and cultural groups in the state.

The ongoing conflicts in Manipur, including the current bout of violence, are a direct consequence of long-standing clashes and animosities between different ethnic communities. The discontent among these groups has sparked violence and clashes in numerous parts of northern India, with Manipur bearing the brunt of the turmoil. The reasons behind the present conflict can be attributed to a complex interplay of various factors related to the people, their socio-economic conditions, and the policies of division and resource allocation.

It is important to acknowledge that Manipur's struggles are not isolated but rather reflective of the larger societal challenges faced by the region. The state's intricate tapestry of diverse cultures, history, and socio-political dynamics creates a fertile ground for conflicts to emerge. These conflicts are not limited to Manipur alone; they are emblematic of the broader issues affecting many regions in northern India.⁵

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that a comprehensive resolution to the conflicts in Manipur requires a multi-faceted approach. Merely addressing the symptoms of violence is

⁴The Hindu- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/extended-exclusion-the-hindu-editorial-on-afspa-in-manipur/article67361893.ece>

⁵My gov't.-<https://blog.mygov.in/a-glimpse-of-the-indigenous-tribes-of-manipur-part-1/>

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insufficient; a deeper examination of the underlying causes, such as systemic inequalities and historical grievances, is vital. It is only by understanding the complexities of Manipur's situation and addressing the root causes that lasting peace and stability can be achieved.

Manipur, with its unique geography, diverse ethnic composition, and complex history, has been grappling with profound challenges in recent years. The state's experience of political turmoil, armed insurgency, and communal clashes underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the various factors contributing to these conflicts. By delving into the interplay of cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic dynamics, we can strive towards fostering lasting peace and harmony in Manipur and the wider region.

CHANGING SOCIO-CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND CONFLICT

Manipur, situated in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, is known for its strategic significance. Unfortunately, it has often faced political conflicts that have had a profound impact on the region. These conflicts have resulted in accusations being made against China and even the West for allegedly providing support to certain religious sects. The porous India-Myanmar border has also contributed to the unrest in Manipur. Interestingly, not much attention has been given to important his tropical and cultural aspects of Manipur, which is known for its unique dance forms, traditional folk music, and rich artistic heritage. The state is also home to the first National Park in India, the KeibulLamjao National Park, which is famous for the endangered brow-antlered deer, also known as the Sangai. Manipur is also known for its lush green hills and picturesque landscapes, making it a popular destination for nature lovers and adventure seekers. However, due to the existing conflicts, the potential of tourism in Manipur remains largely untapped. It is important for the international community and local authorities to address the underlying conflicts and promote peace and stability in the region, allowing Manipur to fulfill its true potential as a cultural and natural treasure of India.⁶

Delving into Manipur's history, we see that the region witnessed significant cultural changes during different periods. The arrival of Islam in the 16th century, Hinduism in the 18th century, and Christianity in the 19th century had a profound impact on the culture of Manipur.⁷ Examining

⁶Bishnour district – <https://bishnupur.nic.in/tourist-place/keibul-lamjao-national-park/>

⁷VIRSHITAL- <https://www.virthli.in/2021/05/history-of-christianity-in-manipur.html?m=1>

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the history of Manipur up to the 19th century, we find that the Meiteis first encountered Hindu conversions in the 18th century. Prior to the adoption of Hinduism during the reign of GaribNivaz (Pamheiba), certain tribal groups in Manipur practiced animism and shamanism. The introduction of Hinduism was met with resistance and conflicts, but eventually, it became an integral part of Manipuri culture.⁸

Similarly, the arrival of Christianity in the 19th century also brought about significant changes in the cultural landscape of Manipur. The missionaries, mainly from the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations, played a crucial role in spreading the message of Christianity among the tribes of Manipur. This led to a shift in religious beliefs and practices, further shaping the cultural identity of the region. As a result of the arrival of Christianity in the 19th century, there were significant cultural changes in Manipur. The missionaries, primarily from Baptist and Presbyterian denominations, had a major impact in spreading the Christian message among the various tribes of Manipur. This brought about a transformation in religious beliefs and practices, ultimately shaping the cultural identity of the region. The introduction of Christianity not only affected the spiritual beliefs of the people, but also influenced their traditions, customs, and societal norms. This shift in cultural dynamics brought about by the adoption of Christianity continues to play a significant role in the cultural landscape of Manipur to this day.

In addition to religion, the cultural influence of neighboring regions also influenced Manipur. The state shares its borders with Myanmar and many ethnic communities have their roots in Southeast Asia. This has led to a diverse cultural tapestry in Manipur, with influences from both Indian and Southeast Asian cultures. The cultural influence of neighboring regions and religion have played a significant role in shaping the identity of Manipur. Situated on the borders with Myanmar, the state has been greatly influenced by the neighboring Southeast Asian countries. The presence of diverse ethnic communities with roots in Southeast Asia has contributed to the rich cultural tapestry of Manipur. This unique blend of Indian and Southeast Asian influences has led to the development of a diverse and vibrant cultural landscape in the state. This cultural

⁸MDPI- <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/12/1041#:~:text=Pamheiba%20was%20bestowed%20the%20name,Singh%202014>).

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fusion can be observed in various aspects of Manipuri life, including art, music, dance, and cuisine, making it a truly fascinating region to explore.⁹

Overall, the history of Manipur reflects the rich tapestry of cultural influences that have shaped the region over centuries. The arrival of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity, as well as the influence of neighboring regions, have all played a crucial role in shaping the cultural identity of Manipur. Today, the state boasts a vibrant and diverse culture that is a testament to its rich history and heritage. Manipuri culture is a complex fusion of diverse influences that have blended together over time. The arrival of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity brought new customs, beliefs, and practices to the region, while the influence of neighboring regions added even more layers to Manipuri culture. As a result, the state is now home to a rich tapestry of traditions, rituals, arts, and languages, each contributing to the unique cultural identity of Manipur. This diversity is celebrated and cherished by the people of Manipur, and it continues to thrive and evolve in the modern era. From its traditional dance forms and music to its culinary traditions and religious festivals, Manipuri culture is a vibrant reflection of its layered history and heritage. Despite the challenges and changes of the modern world, the resilient spirit of Manipuri culture endures, making it a source of pride and inspiration for its people.

The adoption of Hinduism marked a significant social shift, resulting in the emergence of new forms of social relations. The caste system eventually became a prominent feature of Meitei society, introducing the notion of “social superiority.” As a consequence, the mountain tribes were derogatorily labeled with names like “HaoEr,” implying that they were unclean and unfit for habitation. The concept of “Amagasheng” (pure-impure) became deeply ingrained in the daily culture of the Meiteis, serving as a means of social stratification and control. This led to the marginalization and discrimination of certain groups within Meitei society, perpetuating inequality and hindering social mobility.¹⁰

Additionally, the adoption of Hinduism brought with it a new religious framework, with the worship of Hindu deities and the performance of rituals becoming integral parts of Meitei culture. This religious change also influenced artistic expression, with traditional dance, music,

⁹Taylor and Francis- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14755610.2023.2297786?src=>

¹⁰Imphal Times-<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.imphaltimes.com/articles/hinduism-in-manipur/amp/>

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and visual arts coming under the influence of Hindu mythology and symbolism. The construction of temples and shrines dedicated to Hindu gods further solidified the presence of Hinduism in Meitei society, shaping the spiritual and cultural landscape of the region.

Hinduism introduced new literary and philosophical ideas, with religious texts and Sanskrit literature becoming sources of knowledge and literary inspiration for Meitei scholars and writers. The assimilation of Hindu religious and philosophical concepts into Meitei thought led to the development of a unique blend of traditions, beliefs, and practices.¹² the adoption of Hinduism marked a transformative period in the history of the Meitei people, greatly impacting their social, cultural, artistic, and intellectual development.

The impact of Hindu missionary activities further exacerbated the decline of centuries-old religious and social relations in Meitei society. Consequently, groups like ArambaiTenggol, which are considered radical, have emerged with the aim of revitalizing the native culture and traditions of the region. Additionally, the recent revival of Mingting and the increasing popularity of ApokpaMarup in the valley are testament to the ongoing efforts to reclaim the Meiteis' cultural identity. As Hindu missionary activities continued to exert influence on Meitei society, the decline of long-standing religious and social traditions deepened. In response, radical groups such as ArambaiTenggol have emerged, seeking to revitalize and preserve the native culture and traditions of the region. This push for cultural preservation has also led to the revival of Mingting and the growing prominence of ApokpaMarup in the valley¹³, showcasing ongoing efforts to reclaim the cultural identity of the Meitei people. These developments reflect a widespread desire to protect the heritage and customs of the community from outside influence, ensuring the preservation of centuries-old traditions for future generations.. These movements also seek to challenge the political hegemony of India by proposing a unified religion called "Sanamahism" as a symbol of resistance against external influence. Sanamahism,¹⁴ as proposed by these movements, aims to unite the diverse religious practices of the various indigenous communities

¹¹The times of india – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/generals-jottings/looking-for-sanity-in-manipur/>

¹²BBC-<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-66260730.amp>

¹³E- pao.net-[https://e-](https://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.Disintegrating_Manipur.Disintegrating_Manipur_Part_I)

[pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.Disintegrating_Manipur.Disintegrating_Manipur_Part_I](https://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.Disintegrating_Manipur.Disintegrating_Manipur_Part_I)

¹⁴Peepul tree- <https://www.peepulree.world/livehistoryindia/story/living-culture/sanamahism-manipur>

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in India under a common umbrella. This proposed unified religion seeks to challenge the dominant political and social structures in India, providing a platform for resistance against external influences and the imposition of a homogeneous religious identity.

By promoting Sanamahism as a symbol of resistance, these movements are aiming to break the hegemony of the politically powerful forces in India and create a space for the recognition and celebration of the diverse religious traditions and practices of the indigenous communities. They aim to reclaim and assert their own identity and autonomy, challenging the imposition of external beliefs and values. In doing so, they hope to create a more inclusive and diverse religious landscape in India, countering the dominant and homogenizing influences.

SCHEDULE TRIBE DEMAND AND ITS IMPACT

Given the various processes and announcements offered by Mei Tai organizations, the demand for Group Processes is a result of Mei Tai's mission to recover lost culture, language, and identity. Mei Tai, being a society that was once considered untouchable and unclean by the Meitei people, is now being asked to have "backward rights" and sink to the bottom of humanity. This unfortunate reality has resulted in an even deeper division among the community. With the numerous initiatives and pronouncements put forth by Mei Tai groups, there has been a growing need for group processes. This need arises from Mei Tai's mission to reclaim its lost culture, language, and identity. Once considered untouchable and unclean by the Meitei people, Mei Tai now finds itself being relegated to the bottom rung of humanity, with demands to have "backward rights." This unfortunate situation has led to an even greater rift within the community.. . The relationship between Mingting and the tribe has always been complicated and strained. There are claims and objections suggesting that the Meiteis¹⁵ were recognized as a tribe before India's independence, but lost their tribal name after the agreement made with India on September 21, 1949. The Meiteis have been excluded while preparing the ST list under Article 342 of the Indian constitution, which has further fueled the demand for ST status as an effort to rectify this injustice and ensure their rights and representation. The Meiteis argue that they share similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics with other tribes in the region and thus deserve to be included in the Scheduled Tribe list.

¹⁵LYCOS- <https://themanipurpage.tripod.com/history/puwarimeitei.html>

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The exclusion of the Meiteis from the ST list has had significant implications for their access to government schemes, benefits, and political representation. This has resulted in a sense of marginalization and discrimination among the Meitei community. Additionally, the absence of ST status has also hindered their ability to preserve and promote their unique cultural identity and heritage.¹⁶

Efforts to gain ST status for the Meiteis have been ongoing for years and have sparked discussions and debates within India's political and socio-cultural spheres. Various Meitei organizations and leaders have continued to advocate for the recognition of their tribal status and have sought support from the central government to address this issue.¹⁷

the complex and strained relationship between the Meiteis and the tribe status has raised important questions about inclusivity, representation, and indigenous rights within India. The ongoing struggle for ST status reflects the broader challenges of addressing historical injustices and ensuring equal opportunities and rights for all communities.

While there is an ongoing debate about the inclusion of Meitei in the ST list, some people argue that Meitei has not been entirely removed from the ST status, although they don't directly accept this fact. R. Suisa and his proposals faced significant rejection and were even ridiculed and criticized by the Supreme Court. The king of Mei Tai was sternly warned about the potential consequences if he continued to pursue the situation in Mei Tai. Additionally, the Meitei community has been pushing for official recognition as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) in India, which has sparked controversy and discussions among political figures and the broader society. Despite resistance and opposition, advocates for the inclusion of Meitei in the ST list continue to voice their demands and concerns.

Some individuals argue that Meitei has not been entirely stripped of its ST status, although this assertion is not universally accepted. R. Suisa, a key proponent of this viewpoint, has faced significant backlash, with his proposals being rejected and even ridiculed by the Supreme Court.

¹⁶The quint -<https://www.thequint.com/news/politics/manipur-violence-st-status-for-meiteis-valley-vs-hills>

¹⁷The wire -<https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.thewire.in/article/government/inclusion-of-meiteis-in-st-list-rejected-in-1982-2001-historical-documents-kept-from-manipur-hc/amp>

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Additionally, the king of Mei Tai has been sternly warned about potential repercussions if he persists in his efforts to address the situation in Mei Tai.

The debate and tensions surrounding the inclusion of Meitei in the ST list highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of identity and recognition within Indian society. The outcome of this ongoing dispute remains uncertain, as both sides continue to assert their positions and engage in heated discourse. Suisa, foreseeing the future demand for ST, wrote in his diary: “One day these people (Meiteis) will demand ST as law, and then it will be too late to make things right.” In 1980, the issue was raised in the state assembly by Mr. RishangKeishing, the Governor of Manipur, but once again, it faced rejection. In 1995, the Ku Dinh community was granted Other Backward Classes (OBC) status by the Government of India, but the demand for ST status by the Meiteis continued to grow. Protests, demonstrations, and political movements advocating for the recognition of ST status for the Meiteis became more frequent in the following years.¹⁸

The Meiteis argued that they too faced historical and societal disadvantages, and therefore, deserved ST status. They highlighted the economic and social disparities within their community and claimed that without ST status, they would continue to be marginalized and excluded from the benefits and opportunities afforded to ST communities.

Despite their efforts, the demand for ST status for the Meiteis continued to be met with resistance. The lack of consensus and political will, as well as opposition from existing ST communities, further complicated the issue.

The debate and struggle for ST status for the Meiteis continues to this day, with both supporters and opponents passionately advocating for their respective positions. The outcome of this ongoing battle remains uncertain, but it reflects the complex and often contentious nature of identity politics and social justice issues in India. Additionally, two subgroups within the Meitei community, the chakpas (formerly Lois) and ThoubalKhunous (formerly Yaithibis), were identified as Scheduled Castes (SC)¹⁹. These subgroups were historically marginalized and discriminated against, and the recognition of their status as Scheduled Castes was a significant

¹⁸ The hindu- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/st-status-for-meiteis-was-considered-and-rejected-in-1982-and-2001-government-records-show/article67420818.ece/amp/>

¹⁹The wire – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.thewire.in/article/caste/meitei-st-status-exclusion-choice/amp>

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step towards addressing the social and economic inequalities they faced. This recognition also entitles them to specific affirmative action programs and reservations in education and employment opportunities to uplift their communities.

The chakpas and ThoubalKhunous have made significant strides in advocating for their rights and challenging longstanding caste-based discrimination. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure their full inclusion and equal participation in society. Efforts to dismantle caste-based discrimination and ensure the equality and dignity of all members of the Meitei community continue to be a priority for activists and policymakers.²⁰

The demand for ST has gained significant momentum in recent years, leading several sections of the Meitei community to form the Manipur Scheduled Castes Committee (STDCM) in 2012. However, this increased demand has also created tensions within the community itself. Many fear that if their demands are met, they will become even more isolated and lose access to jobs and other resources that they once had.²¹

Moreover, the government's reservation policies have sparked debates and disagreements within the community, with some questioning the demographics of the Meitei community and where they fit within the existing caste system. In addition, there is concern that the inclusion of the Meitei community as a Scheduled Tribe could disrupt the delicate balance of power and resources within the region, leading to potential conflicts with other tribal communities.

On the other hand, proponents of the ST demand argue that it is a necessary step towards providing equality and opportunities for all members of the community. They argue that the current situation is an injustice, as many Meitei individuals face discrimination and lack access to the benefits and protections that are afforded to scheduled tribes²².

The complexities and tensions surrounding the demand for ST status illustrate the challenges of navigating identity, entitlement, and representation within a diverse and complex society. Finding a resolution that addresses the concerns of all parties involved will require thorough and sensitive negotiations, as well as open dialogue to ensure that the needs and rights of all Meitei

²⁰Muda.mn.gov.in- <https://muda.mn.gov.in/>

²¹India bride equity – <https://www.ibef.org/states/manipur-presentation>

²²Planning manipur- <https://planningmanipur.gov.in/en/>

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community members are upheld. As the demand for ST status has grown, opposition has emerged from tribal groups. Numerous protests and demonstrations have been held against Meitei's ST demands at various times in the hills of Manipur. The villagers have always viewed Meitei's demand for ST status through the lens of existing power relations. They perceive it as an attempt by Meiteis to expand their control over the tribe, asserting their power and attempting to gain control over lands and resources. The conflict over ST status has also spilled over into disputes over land and resources, further exacerbating tensions between the Meitei and tribal communities. The designation of ST status has also been seen as a potential threat to the political representation and autonomy of tribal communities within Manipur. The growing opposition from tribal groups has ignited a fierce debate²³ about the implications of granting ST status to the Meitei community and the potential impact it could have on the traditional rights and privileges of tribal groups. This complex and contentious issue has become a focal point of political and social tensions within Manipur, and the struggle for recognition and rights continues to unfold amidst a backdrop of historical grievances and contemporary power struggles. However, it is important to note that Nagas and Kukis are not against promoting equality and harmony between the mountains and valleys. They recognize the need for coexistence and mutual respect between their communities. The Nagas and Kukis acknowledge the interconnectedness of their cultures and traditions, and value the diversity and richness it brings to their region. They are committed to working towards a peaceful and inclusive society, where all individuals, regardless of their background, can thrive and contribute to the betterment of their communities. Embracing unity and understanding, the Nagas and Kukis strive to build bridges and foster relationships, in order to create a more harmonious and equitable society for generations to come.

One noteworthy aspect of this situation is the significant political representation that the Meitei community enjoys. The Meitei community holds 40 legislative seats in the 60-member²⁴ Legislative Assembly and holds influential positions in several ministerial and government roles. The All University Students Union of Manipur (ATSUM)²⁵ has raised serious concerns about the state government's violation of reservation policy, adding to the current stress

²³MANIDCO- <https://manidco.in/>

²⁴Manipur legislative assembly – <https://www.assembly.mn.gov.in/>

²⁵ Telegraph India – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.telegraphindia.com/amp/north-east/all-tribal-students-union-manipur-blames-bjp-led-government-for-unrest-in-the-state/cid/1935936>

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within the community. The Meitei community in Manipur has a strong political presence, with the American imperial community holding a majority of legislative seats in the 60-member Legislative Assembly. They also hold influential positions within the government, working in various ministerial roles. This significant political representation has caused tension and concern within the community, particularly regarding the violation of reservation policies by the state government. The All University Students Union of Manipur (ATSUM)²⁶ has raised serious concerns about these violations, adding to the current stress and dissatisfaction within the Meitei community. This issue highlights the complex and contentious nature of political representation and power dynamics within Manipur. It is crucial to recognize that the current tensions have been shaped by a complex interplay of various factors. Notably, on March 27, the Manipur High Court urged the state government to include Meitei in the ST list, highlighting it as one of the root causes of the present violence. On May 3, 2023, the Manipur community group led by the All Students Union (ATSUM) took to the streets across the Manipur hills to protest against the Supreme Court's decision. These events illustrate that the current tensions in Manipur are not solely the result of recent disputes, but are deeply rooted in long-standing issues. The call to include Meitei in the ST list and the protests against the Supreme Court's decision highlight the historical and cultural complexities that have been at play in Manipur for many years. It is important to understand the historical context and the various perspectives involved in order to address the underlying issues and move towards a resolution. Only by recognizing and addressing these complexities can constructive dialogue and lasting solutions be achieved. Unfortunately, the protests turned violent in the Torbung area of Churachanpur²⁷ district and quickly spread within the areas controlled by Mingting and Kuki. Mass murders, arson, and looting followed, forcing the Kukis to flee the city of Imphal. The once-thriving Kuki houses were reduced to ashes. Tragically, many people living in Mingdi, the Kuki-controlled region, suffered the same devastating fate. The violent protests in the Torbung area of Churachanpur district quickly escalated and spread throughout the territories held by Mingting and Kuki. What began as a peaceful demonstration turned into a scene of mass murders, arson, and looting,

²⁶India Today – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.indiatodayne.in/amp/manipur/story/manipur-government-responsible-for-violence-in-state-atsum-556059-2023-05-10>

²⁷The Times of India – https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.timesofindia.com/india/mizoram-awaits-centres-assistance-for-providing-shelter-to-12600-people-from-manipur/amp_articleshow/102263290.cms

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prompting the Kuki population to flee the city of Imphal. Once-beautiful Kuki homes were reduced to smoldering ruins, leaving behind a trail of destruction and tragedy. The people of Mingdi, who lived in the Kuki-controlled region, endured the same heart-wrenching fate as their homes and livelihoods were destroyed in the chaos. The once-thriving community was left reeling from the sudden and devastating effect²⁸

STATE AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT LACK OF INTREST

Some of the important events that took place in the history of Manipur a few centuries ago show the deepening of the conflicted situation in the valley of duality and cultural differences. It is essential to understand that these events have had a significant impact on the state. Additionally, the rise of national consciousness among various ethnic groups after independence led to new tensions, making it crucial to address the root causes of conflicts and work towards sustainable solutions. During the colonial period, Manipur experienced significant changes in demographics, governance, and economy, leading to a complex interplay of political, economic, and social forces. This has shaped the current landscape of the state, with a state of duality and cultural differences existing in the valley. The rise of national consciousness among different ethnic groups after independence further exacerbated existing tensions, creating a need to address the root causes of conflicts and work towards sustainable solutions.

The Impact of these historical events on Manipur cannot be overstated. They have contributed to the challenges and complexities faced by the state today, affecting governance, development, and social cohesion. It is crucial to understand the deep-rooted nature of these issues in order to effectively address them and work towards a more harmonious and equitable future for Manipur.

Since gaining independence, Manipur has unfortunately experienced civil unrest due to military insurgency, ethnic violence, and terrorism committed by both state and central powers. These ongoing challenges have hindered progress in the region and have had severe implications for the people of Manipur. Despite attempts to resolve these issues through dialogue and support, and calls for armed groups to participate in politics, military revolts continue to occur, disrupting the lives of innocent civilians and perpetuating a cycle of fear and uncertainty.

²⁸The hindu- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur-incidents-tragedy-for-entire-country-farooq-abdullah/article67113377.ece/amp/>

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The presence of armed insurgent groups has resulted in a constant state of conflict and tension, making it difficult for the people of Manipur to fully enjoy the benefits of their hard-won independence. The violence and instability have also had a detrimental impact on the region's economy, hindering investment and hindering infrastructure development.²⁹

Efforts to address the root causes of the unrest, such as historical grievances and economic disparities, have been met with challenges and setbacks. The lack of a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the issues plaguing Manipur has led to a sense of disillusionment among the populace, with many feeling as though their voices and concerns are not being adequately addressed by those in power.³⁰

Moving forward, it is crucial for all stakeholders, including the state and central governments, armed groups, and civil society organizations, to come together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect to find a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Manipur. Only through genuine dialogue, a commitment to addressing long-standing grievances, and a dedication to inclusive and equitable development can the people of Manipur hope to move past the cycle of violence and build a brighter future for themselves and generations to come. The lack of positive results from actions taken by Delhi highlights the pressing need for a change in the current system, one that considers the significance of culture and geography. The city of Delhi is facing a challenging situation as the current system in place is not yielding positive results from the actions taken. This emphasizes the urgent need for a change in the current system. There is a growing recognition that the significance of culture and geography must be taken into account when developing strategies and policies for the region. No longer can decisions be made without considering the specific cultural values and geographical conditions of Delhi. It is becoming increasingly clear that a more holistic and inclusive approach is required to address the complex and multi-faceted issues facing the city. Only by integrating cultural and geographical

²⁹Scroll.org- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.scroll.in/article/1055257/the-return-of-meitei-insurgents-marks-a-new-turn-in-manipur-conflict>

³⁰E pao.net-https://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Whistleblower.Civil_Society_Movement_Our_Last_Hope

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considerations into the decision-making process can Delhi hope to see meaningful and sustainable improvements in its overall well-being.³¹

To achieve long-term peace and stability, it is crucial to address the root causes of violence and conflict. Merely resorting to short-term solutions may temporarily alleviate the situation but ultimately lead to further violence. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize de-escalation measures and for the central government to take responsibility for the disillusioned masses who have lost faith in the state machinery. This means implementing socio-economic reforms, improving governance and accountability, and addressing underlying grievances and inequalities. It also involves investing in education, job creation, and social infrastructure to provide opportunities for young people at risk of being drawn into violence. In addition, meaningful and inclusive dialogue with all affected stakeholders is essential to build trust and find sustainable solutions. It requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, involving not just the government but also civil society, local communities, and international partners, to effectively address the root causes of violence and conflict and pave the way for long-term peace and stability. The current crisis must be reframed as more than just a war against narco-crimes, as this oversimplifies the matter. There is a need to address all interconnected issues, including the involvement of top politicians and other armed groups in the drug business. Furthermore, the underlying social and economic conditions that contribute to the proliferation of narco-crimes must also be examined and addressed. This includes poverty, lack of opportunity, and systemic inequality that push individuals towards illicit activities. The reach of narco-trafficking extends far beyond just the drug trade, influencing political power, fueling corruption, and perpetuating violence. To truly address the crisis, a comprehensive approach that tackles all of these interconnected issues must be implemented. This will require unwavering dedication from governments, international organizations, and local communities to work collaboratively towards sustainable solutions. Only by reframing the current crisis and addressing its complexities can meaningful and lasting change be achieved.³²

³¹The hindu- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/twenty-three-mlas-sign-resolution-to-protect-territorial-integrity-of-manipur/article67297962.ece/amp/>

³²Deccan herlad-

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/india%252Fmanipur%252Fdrugs-worth-over-rs-1610-crore-seized-by-assam-rifles-in-manipur-since-july-2022-2639227>

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Negotiations at various levels are necessary to foster understanding and find sustainable solutions. However, it is crucial that the central government demonstrates its commitment by actively engaging in this process. Manipur cannot be left alone in its struggles; it requires the intervention and peace-building machinery of the Centre. Such efforts should aim to restore faith in the state institutions and rebuild trust among the different communities in Manipur. In order to achieve lasting peace and stability in Manipur, negotiations need to take place on multiple levels. It is essential for the central government to show its dedication by participating actively in these discussions.³³ Manipur cannot tackle its challenges on its own, it needs the involvement and support of the central government in order to effectively address the issues at hand. These efforts should focus on not only resolving immediate conflicts, but also on rebuilding faith in state institutions and fostering trust amongst the diverse communities in Manipur. The central government's engagement in this process is crucial for the successful and sustainable resolution of conflicts in the region.

The history of Manipur and the current challenges it faces reflect the complexities and deep-rooted issues that need to be addressed for lasting peace and development. By acknowledging the past and its impact on the present, prioritizing dialogue and de-escalation, and ensuring the active involvement of the central government, Manipur can begin to overcome its current crisis. Only through concerted efforts and a comprehensive approach can Manipur and people experience future of peace, stability, and prosperity. The rich cultural heritage of Manipur, its diverse population, and its potential for economic growth and development all stand to benefit from a sustainable and inclusive resolution of its challenges. It is essential for all stakeholders to come together to find common ground and work towards a shared vision for the future of Manipur. This will require collaboration, flexibility, and a willingness to address the underlying grievances and inequalities that have fueled conflicts and tensions in the region. With ongoing commitment and support, Manipur has the potential to emerge as a strong and vibrant state that can contribute positively to the overall progress and unity of India as a whole.

CENTER AND STATE GOVERNMENT TAKE TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

³³Scroll.net- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.scroll.in/article/1050773/poppy-in-the-hills-why-manipurs-civil-war-is-being-linked-to-narcotics-trade>

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It has been widely accepted among the public and within various societal segments that the utilization of armed forces immediately following the occurrence of violence has been a matter of great discomfort. Moreover, it has been observed that this approach often backfires, resulting in an increase in violence. Interestingly, the deployment of armed forces has even led to the expulsion of criminals from the state. It has become a common consensus among the general population and across different societal groups that relying on armed forces as an immediate response to violence is a source of great unease. In fact, it has been noted that this tactic frequently has the opposite effect, actually causing an escalation in violence. Surprisingly, the presence of armed forces has even driven criminals out of the state.. Notably, a significant number of weapons and ammunition were seized during this period, indicating the seriousness of the situation. In fact, reports suggest that more than 4,537,000 weapons and 50,000 bullets³⁴, which were allegedly seized from criminals, went missing from police stations and soldiers, highlighting the inadequacy of the state army. This suggests the alarming potential for these weapons and ammunition to fall into the wrong hands and be used for criminal activities, posing a substantial threat to public safety. Additionally, it raises questions about the efficiency and security measures within law enforcement agencies, as well as the potential for corruption and misuse of these seized items. Overall, the missing weapons and ammunition point to the need for improved oversight and management of such resources to prevent further security risks and bolster public trust in the capabilities of the state's armed forces and law enforcement agencies.

This situation has further escalated conflicts between various state institutions, with the national police being particularly involved. It is disconcerting to note that the theft of weapons and ammunition by these state apparatuses has been allowed without any form of retaliation or resistance.³⁵ The worsening of this situation has only served to exacerbate pre-existing tensions and hostilities between different state bodies, with the national police taking an especially active role. It is distressing and alarming to observe that the theft of arms and ammunitions by these government agencies has been permitted to occur without facing any consequences or opposition. The lack of appropriate acknowledgment and action from the Prime Minister

³⁴Hindustan Times – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/security-forces-recover-arms-ammunition-looted-in-ethnic-violence-hit-manipur-101697785796017-amp.html>

³⁵Hindustan Times – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/video-shows-manipur-police-assam-rifles-face-off-15-houses-torched-1-person-shot-top-updates-101691287394469-amp.html>

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regarding the Manipur issue has raised concernsⁱⁱ among the general populace, questioning the government's commitment to resolving the problem. ³⁶The Prime Minister's silence on the matter, coupled with the lack of significant debate in Parliament, has only fueled public discontent. The lack of appropriate acknowledgment and action from the Prime Minister regarding the Manipur issue has sparked deep concerns and widespread skepticism among the general populace. Many are questioning the government's commitment to swiftly and effectively resolving this longstanding problem. The Prime Minister's noticeable silence on the matter, coupled with the lack of substantial debate and action in Parliament, ³⁷has only served to fan the flames of public discontent and frustration. Without concrete and decisive steps from the highest levels of government, the people of Manipur and the nation as a whole are left feeling abandoned and unheard, increasing the urgency for meaningful and decisive action.

Thus, it is evident that the Manipur issue remains a critical concern that warrants immediate attention from the government. The lack of open, public discourse and the suppression of voices in addressing the issue only further exacerbate the situation, leaving the citizens of Manipur feeling marginalized and unheard. This lack of communication and dialogue only deepens the feeling of alienation and frustration among the people of Manipur, leading to continued unrest and dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. It is crucial for the government to engage in genuine and transparent conversations with the people of Manipur, taking into account their perspectives, experiences, and concerns in order to address the underlying issues and work towards a sustainable and effective resolution. It is only through open and honest dialogue that a true and lasting solution can be achieved, one that respects the rights and aspirations of the people of Manipur and brings about a sense of justice, equity, and inclusivity for all. It is essential for the government to prioritize the voices and needs of the people of Manipur in order to bring about a positive and meaningful change that will benefit the entire community. Failure to do so will only perpetuate the cycle of distrust and dissatisfaction, further hindering progress and resulting in ongoing tension and conflict. The time to act is now, and it is imperative for the

³⁶The hindu- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/in-manipur-army-and-paramilitary-forces-face-a-constant-challenge-armed-men-in-police-uniforms/article67292272.ece/amp/>

³⁷NDTV – <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.ndtv.com/india-news/chinta-mat-karo-assam-rifles-daring-rescue-video-amid-ambush-on-manipur-police-commandos-4550361/amp/1>

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government to take decisive action in addressing the concerns of the people of Manipur in a meaningful and inclusive manner.

It Is worth noting that the Prime Minister addressed the issue in the Assembly for the first time three months³⁸ after the violence occurred, on August 10. However, his speech, which lasted for two hours and twenty minutes, only briefly mentioned the Manipur violence six times in a mere seven minutes of his overall address. This minimal attention paid to the issue has further fueled the anger of protesters and citizens across the country. Many individuals and activist groups have criticized the Prime Minister for his delayed response and lack of substantial attention to the Manipur violence in his address. The minimal focus on the issue has not only incited anger and frustration among the protesters but has also raised concerns about the government's commitment to addressing such critical matters effectively. Additionally, the Prime Minister's speech has sparked a public outcry, with many expressing dissatisfaction and disappointment over the inadequate acknowledgment and addressing of the situation. The lack of urgency and priority given to the Manipur violence in the Prime Minister's address has only heightened the collective demand for accountability and action to address the root causes of the violence and ensure justice for the affected individuals and communities.

Furthermore, it is disheartening to observe the suppression of voices addressing the Manipur issue in the Union Assembly. When Mizo National Front MP Mr. K Vanlalvena raised the matter, his microphone was deliberately silenced, sending a clear message of suppression.³⁹ The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Union Assembly, JagdeepDhankhar, even stated that Mr. Vanlalvena's speech should not have been recorded, undermining the importance of discussing the issue within the assembly. This kind of censorship is a violation of the democratic principles that the Union Assembly is meant to uphold. It is crucial for all voices, including those representing marginalized communities, to be heard and considered in the assembly. By silencing these voices, the government is actively disregarding the concerns and rights of the people of Manipur and perpetuating a system of oppression.

³⁸India today- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.indiatoday.in/amp/india/story/manipur-violence-recap-hundreds-killed-thousand-displaced-2415128-2023-08-03>

³⁹ The statesman- <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/manipur-tribal-body-mizoram-mp-slam-amit-shah-over-his-infiltrators-comments-in-ls-1503210392.html>

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It Is imperative that the Union Assembly re-evaluates its approach to addressing the Manipur issue and allows for open and constructive discussion on the matter. Ignoring or suppressing the voices of those directly affected by the issue only serves to exacerbate the existing tensions and grievances. By creating an environment in which all voices are welcomed, the assembly can work towards finding inclusive and lasting solutions to the challenges facing Manipur. The rights and voice of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic or regional background, must be respected and upheld in a true democracy.. Similarly, Dr.LorhoPfozii,⁴⁰ Member of Parliament from Outer Manipur Constituency, was advised against mentioning the ongoing issue in the Lok Sabha. The deliberate suppression of a matter of national importance raises serious concerns about the government's approach to governance and democratic principles. Moreover, Dr.Pfozii's attempt to raise the ongoing issue in the Lok Sabha highlights the government's reluctance to address crucial matters affecting the nation. This deliberate suppression of a matter of national importance raises serious concerns about the government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and upholding democratic principles. The suppression of crucial topics in the parliament not only stifles meaningful debate and discussion but also undermines the foundational principles of democracy. It is imperative for the government to recognize the importance of addressing these issues and allowing open and honest discourse in the parliament for the betterment of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Since gaining independence, Manipur has unfortunately experienced civil unrest due to military insurgency, ethnic violence, and terrorism committed by both state and central powers. These ongoing challenges have hindered progress in the region and have had severe implications for the people of Manipur. Despite attempts to resolve these issues through dialogue and support, and calls for armed groups to participate in politics, military revolts continue to occur , resulting in further instability and suffering for the people of Manipur.

The decades-long military insurgency has led to acts of violence and oppression against the local population, causing widespread fear and insecurity. Ethnic tensions have also fueled conflicts,

⁴⁰Abp live- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/news.abplive.com/videos/news/india-lorho-s-pfoze-claims-wanting-to-speaking-about-the-manipur-incident-but-didn-t-get-a-chance-abp-news-1622476/amp>

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leading to discrimination and divisions among the diverse communities in Manipur. In addition, acts of terrorism by both state and central powers have only added to the turmoil and suffering of the people.

The persistent civil unrest and instability in Manipur have had significant implications for the region's development and progress. Economic growth has been hindered, infrastructure development has been constrained, and social and educational opportunities have been limited due to the ongoing conflict and instability.

To achieve long-term peace and stability, it is crucial to address the root causes of violence and conflict. Merely resorting to short-term solutions may temporarily alleviate the situation but ultimately lead to further violence. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize de-escalation measures and for the central government to take responsibility for the disillusioned masses who have lost faith in the state machinery. To achieve sustainable, long-term peace and stability, addressing the underlying root causes of violence and conflict is essential. While short-term solutions may provide temporary relief, they are not effective in resolving deeper issues and may even exacerbate the situation in the long run. It is imperative to prioritize de-escalation measures and for the central government to take on the responsibility of addressing the grievances of disillusioned masses who have lost trust in the state apparatus. Only by addressing these foundational issues can lasting peace and stability be achieved. The current crisis must be reframed as more than just a war against narco-crimes, as this oversimplifies the matter. There is a need to address all interconnected issues, including the involvement of top politicians and other armed groups in the drug business. The current crisis must be reframed as more than just a war against narco-crimes. This oversimplified view fails to address the interconnected issues at the heart of the problem. It's not just drug cartels that are fueling the crisis, but also the involvement of top politicians and other armed groups in the drug business. We cannot effectively address the crisis if we only focus on one aspect of it. It requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complexities and interdependencies of all the contributing factors. Only by addressing these interconnected issues can we hope to make meaningful progress towards resolving the crisis.

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Negotiations at various levels are necessary to foster understanding and find sustainable solutions. However, it is crucial that the central government demonstrates its commitment by actively engaging in this process. Manipur cannot be left alone in its struggles; it requires the intervention and peace-building machinery of the Centre. Such efforts should aim to restore faith in the state institutions and rebuild trust among the different communities in Manipur. Negotiations at various levels, including between different communities and with the central government, are crucial in fostering understanding and finding sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by Manipur. It is imperative that the central government demonstrates its commitment to this process by actively engaging in negotiations and providing the necessary support and resources.

In conclusion, the history of Manipur and the current challenges it faces reflect the complexities and deep-rooted issues that need to be addressed for lasting peace and development. By acknowledging the past and its impact on the present, prioritizing dialogue and de-escalation, and ensuring the active involvement of the central government, Manipur can begin to overcome its crisis. Only through concerted efforts and a comprehensive approach can Manipur and its people experience a future of stability, prosperity, and unity. It will require the cooperation and commitment of all stakeholders, including political leaders, civil society, and the international community, to work together towards sustainable solutions that address the underlying grievances and bring about positive change. By investing in education, infrastructure, and economic opportunities, and promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity, Manipur can build a more inclusive and resilient society. It is only through these collective efforts that the people of Manipur can truly thrive and fulfill their potential. The challenges may be great, but with determination and collaboration, a brighter future for Manipur is possible.

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