



The Impact of Ethnic Clash on Preference Priorities Marriages in Manipur

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ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the ongoing clash in Manipur. Despite years of coexistence, the major ethnic communities- Meitei, Kuki-Zo, and Naga- have failed to establish effective governance policies. The disparity in rights between tribal and non-tribal populations, with non-tribal groups having greater political representation, further fuels tensions emerges. This paper analyses the conflict in Manipur only from an objective lens and does not intend to depict any bias to any communities that are a party to the situation. By examining these parameters, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex ethnic dynamics in Manipur. The findings suggest that addressing historical grievances, equitable resource distribution, accountability and legal reforms are critical for lasting peace in the state.

1.INTRODUCTION

The hill of Manipur echo and reflect different sounds and sights. They are inhabited by ethnic groups with a global outlook. Bestowed with diverse flora and fauna, Manipur is home to a host of species hard to spot elsewhere. One with an inclination for tourist adventure will be greeted in this state with pleasant surprises ranging from virgin forests to cascading waterfalls, breath-taking hill-sites,



valley-view and streams flowing to lakes levelled by shades of emerald. Having teetered the yoke of British colonialism from 1891 to 1947, it is to the credit of freedom loving Manipuri's that their collective walk along the path of mainstream nationalism has not tottered in the post-independence era. In 1949 heralded the merger of Manipur with the Union of India. In 1972, it became a full-fledged state priding itself with a 60-member Legislative Assembly out of which 19 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes, and 1 for Scheduled Castes. The people of Manipur elect 2MPs for Lok Shaba and 1MP for the Rajya Sabha. Manipur is situated in extreme north-eastern part of India, bordering Myanmar for about 352 km in East and South of it; Nagaland to north, Assam to west and Mizoram to south. Manipur shares its borders with Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Myanmar. About 90% of area is mountainous, surrounding the central valley sloping to south. Forests cover 77.4% of Manipur. It covers an area of 22327 sq. km . Manipur has population of 2,855,794 as per 2011 census. Of this total, 57.2% live in valley districts and remaining 42.8% in hill districts. The valley is mainly inhabited by Meitei speaking population. The hills are inhabited mainly by several ethno-linguistically diverse tribes belonging to Nagas, Kukis and smaller tribal groupings. Naga and Kuki settlements are also found in valley region, though less in numbers. It also borders two regions of Myanmar, Sagaing Region to east and Chin State to south. Manipur is divided into 16 districts and has 34 recognized Scheduled Tribes and 3 non- tribal groups, belonging to different ethno - linguistic traits. The ethnic groups can be broadly classified into three categories: Meitei, Naga and Kuki – Mizo. They belong to Mongoloid race and Tibeto – Burman language family varying from one another. Meitei's are concentrated in the valley and are dominant population group in Manipur. Naga and Chin- Kuki – Mizo groups inhabit hill areas surrounding Manipur plains (Thangboi Zou, 2015). The primary conflict in Manipur involves a variety of insurgent groups constituted along tribal identities and

demanding sovereign homeland, politicization of ethnic identities in post-independence era and internal rivalry in state politics along religious and ethnic lines has profoundly impacted quality and administration of the state and also course of insurgent politics. Tensions between ethnic and tribal subgroups over pattern of land tenure and distribution have triggered multiplicity of conflicts. A number of accumulated grievances several of which are historical in nature fuel Manipuri discontent. The circumstance of Manipur's merger with India in October 1949 continues to cast its shadow on post-colonial politics of Manipur.



2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In *Hussain, Alfrida, (4 May 2023) article “How Manipur violence unfolded: A timeline of events”*, state that a shoot-at-sight order has been issued as violence broke out in Manipur between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and the hill based Kukis. Here’s a timeline of events that led to violence in most parts of the state. A decade-long faultline is reopening in Manipur as violent protests broke out against a high court direction to the state government. On April 27 a day before honorable Biren Singh’s visit to Churachandpur, the open gym was scheduled to inaugurate by CM was set up on fire. Then the next day under section 144 was imposed along with a five-day suspension of internet services. The protesters and security forces clashed with police using tear gas shells to disperse the mob violence. As Meiteis and protesters (Tribals) clashed on the streets, state security and arm forces rushed to the scene and prohibitory orders were imposed in eight districts. On next day fresh incidents of violence in Imphal. More vandalism, destruction of properties and clashes between Meiteis and Kukis. The Rapid Action Force was deployed along with the Army, CRPF, Assam Rifles and State police to contain violence. On this day, the Government issued a shoot sight order in “extreme cases whereby forms of persuasion, warning, reasonable force have been exhausted and the situation cannot be controlled”.

In the journal of *All India Lawyers Association for Justice, (August 2023) as*

“Manufacturing ethnic segregation and conflict: A report on the violence in Manipur”, represents a violent conflict broke out between two ethnic communities, the Meiteis and Kukis in the north eastern state of Manipur on May 3rd 2023. Since then, the conflict has left over 175 persons dead, thousands injured and over 60,000 civilians displaced and residing in relief camps across the valley and hills of Manipur. The team visited various affected areas in the valley districts of Imphal and Bishnupur, and the hill districts of Kangpokpi and Churachandpur. Across the relief camps in both the hills and the valley, displaced civilians residing at relief camps are overcome by overwhelming grief of having lost their homes, properties and livelihoods. The civilians were shared with the team poignant stories of fleeing from violence, hiding in the forests and the arduous journeys they undertook to reach the relief camps. Almost all conversations ended with people sharing their fear, trauma and uncertainty about what the future holds for them. As far as political solution is concerned the Kukis have taken a clear stand that separate administration is the only way out. Their demand is for Union Territory (UT) status with an elected legislature to begin to the Kuki-dominated hill districts. While the Meitei community demand the withdrawal of Suspension of Operation (SoO) against with the Kuki militant groups, protection of



territorial integrity of Manipur and strict action against forest encroachments, Kuki military and poppy cultivation as a precondition for any dialogue.

In the article *Vijaita Singh, (10 April 2026) "NIA may probe death of Meitei children in blast"*, imposed protests and shutdown continue in Manipur, Imphal and valley areas; curfew and internet curbs to remain; CM to request Centre to stop withdrawing securing personnel from the state. The investigation into the killing of two Meitei children in a "terror bomb attack" in Bishnupur district Manipur's on April 7th is likely to be handed over to the

National Investigation Agency (NIA), a senior Government official said on Thursday. The attackers had not been identified yet so far and all aspects were being looked into. The state Government is likely to request the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to halt the withdrawal of 70 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)- around 7,000 personnel- for election related deployment in other States. For intensify operations, security forces have been inquired against the United Kuki National Army (UK-NA), an insurgent group active in Henglep subdivision, south west of Churachandpur district since 2015.

Gaps

The state seen agitations begin with hope, only to end in negotiations with solutions while justice remains delayed. Now, such voices or slogan are being suppressed and a form of dictatorship and open hooliganism emerges to be operating under the nose of the Centre or State Government.

3.OBJECTIVE

The state need to sustain action and pressure to make peace, harmony, stability, improved quality of life, development for people of Manipur when society and polity are led by leaders who are intellectually bankrupt or challenged, and with no ideological clarity or commitment, so ordinary citizens will suffer the fate of sheep without a shepherd .The most fundamental core issue is how to maintain and enforce "law and order" as a "State" and how to protect the lives and the property, rights of citizens when the state is uneven to do so and when there are doubts about its connection with them.

4.METHODOLOGY

The study will employ descriptive methodology to highlights the integration approach to the ethnic violence in Manipur of 2023 which altered the principles and priorities individuals use when choosing a matching partner in marriage.



5. Ethnic violence in Manipur Valley

The ethnic clashes of May 2023 had disrupted normal life in both valley and hill of Manipur. This disrupt has imposed significant displacement, part of issues, community dispute and misunderstanding, and even transform into socio economic status, and security, all of which are significant factors occurring for partner selection, particularly among the Meitei community.

Normal life of citizen disrupts, unrest since 3rd May 2023, long standing grievances between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in Manipur erupted into clashes and ethnic violence. In Hussain, Alfrida, (4 May 2023) article “How Manipur violence unfolded: A timeline of events”, state that a short-at-sight order has been issued as violence broke out in Manipur between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and the hill based Kukis. The majority community of Meiteis live predominantly in the state’s Imphal valley while the Kuki-Zo populate the surrounding hill regions. The conflict between the trivial Kuki-Zo and Meitei broke out in May 2023, leaving at least 260 people dead and displacing about 62000 civilians more. Over the past three years, Manipur as a legal-constitutional entity has been openly delegitimized and rendered ineffective and largely irrelevant, existing in the name only. The role of the government of India, presiding over this condition either as a helpless bystander or as a collaborator and its part in producing this comprehend, will be questioned not only by the present generation but by history.

6. Government Stance on Ethnic Clash and Vigilant

Setting a trap with intent requires meticulous study. One must observe the target closely such that its nature, needs, fears and trauma or anxieties, its weaknesses as well as its strength, across every point of contact. The trap is tailored accordingly and laid by forces intent on dismantling the life and order of a nation and its people is far from simple. It operates through the deliberate management and manipulation of emotion, and perception. It exploits contradictions within the society, leverages the competing interests of key players and stakeholders, and deepens both existing and manufactured fault or impugn lines and spheres of influence. Law and order is some state subject and police is that institution which directly deals with it and protect the property, right of citizen without fear which deliver justice and assert lawful authority.

In recent news, April 7th 2026, morning bomb attack of tragic weighs heavily on the family’s home killed two minors in their deep sleeping and seriously injured their mother, a Guwahati-based nurse while the father serves the nation as BSF jawan in Bihar yet he was unable to save his two kids. The mother return home only to be with her two kid, yet she could not save her two kids from the



excruciating pain incurred from the terror blast of terrorist's attack. How merciless is fate to her, her children were taken away from her at same time on this unforgettable tragic day. The pain from the injuries she suffered in the bomb attack pales in comparison to the unbearable grief of losing her two children (Vijaita, 2026).

The violence of Manipur toll rises to normal life across Imphal valley for the second day on Wednesday 8 April 2026 where restrictions were imposed following a bomb attack that killed two minors at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur District on 7 April 2026, Thursday. In the article Vijaita Singh, (10 April 2026) "NIA may probe death of Meitei children in blast", imposed protests and shutdown continue in Manipur, Imphal and valley areas. The tension has spiked after security forces prevented various groups from organizing protest rallies such as civil society organizations that is Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), All Manipur United Clubs Organization (AMUCO), etc. The authorities imposed the restrictions after two civilian, protesting the bomb attack, died in CRPF firing. A third civilian died in Imphal on Wednesday. This is a mob stormed of a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp at Gelmol, over one km away, a buffer zone between Meitei and Kuki-Zo areas since 2023, resulting in the death of three protesters in CRPF firing. Nearly the victim house, another unexploded device- a galvanized iron pipe with the tip of a factory- made rocket head affixed to it and wires dangling from the sides - was defused by the Manipur police and sent for forensic examination.

In addition, road blockades were reported from several areas, including Imphal East, Imphal West Districts, Thoubal District, Bishnupur District, also depict affected life in Naga- inhabited areas across six hill districts on the next day of a three-total shutdown called by the Naga Council. The shutdown was against the April 18 killing of two Tangkhul Naga civilian in an ambush by Kuki militant at TM Rasom in Ukhrul District of Manipur. These shattered illusions disrupted to dependent variable of ranking of marriage factors such as ethnicity of partner, religion, family view, love or compatibility, socio-economic status, education, behavior, personal trait.

The ritual condemnation alone will not suffice and relieve from the burning threat of state. The authority of Centre and State Government of India must tell the citizen clarity and unequivocally that is the security forces present here on a 'peace keeping mission' to maintain "buffer zone" (unconstitution) in troubled or foreign territories, or they are forces bound to uphold the constitution, law and order of this land and to protect the lives, right and property of the citizens. Unless this is clarified, the citizen cannot be faulted for concluding that what is unfolding is a calculated attempt, carried out in collusion with stages, to dismantle the state of Manipur.



7. CONCLUSION

Protest is a democratic right and people are protesting for the authorities to take action and justice for the deceased of children and civilians of Manipur. We, the citizen, must remain vigilant let's not fall into the trap of forces inimical to our motherland. Particularly the authorities of Central and State Government of India, if the authority is honest and true to the constitution of India, law and order, then hunt them down and deliver the accountability, transparency, integrity and reform of true administration. For assert of true leadership and authority, the culprits must be obviously brought into justice.

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