

**Narratives of Violence against Women in Armed Conflict: A
Study of Naga Women in Manipur**

A thesis submitted in January 2019 to the University of Hyderabad in partial
fulfilment for the award of

**Doctoral of Philosophy
In
Gender Studies**

By

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DECLARATION

I, **M. Yurreisem** hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Narratives of Violence against Women in Armed Conflict: A Study of Naga Women in Manipur**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Prof. Rekha Pande** is a bona fide research work, which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that, it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/INFLIBNET.

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A: Published in the following Publications:

- 1) *Drug Trafficking by ‘Men in Uniform’ and its Impact on Women in Manipur*, in Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary, Vol-3, Issue-6, June 2018. e-ISSN: 2455-3085, pp. 172-174.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis endeavors to look at the various kinds of violence against women, particularly against Naga women in Manipur by the State and non-state armed actors. It will also explore the experiences of women living in armed conflict areas and analyze the impacts. Violence against women surrounds us all, whether or not we are aware of it. And since violence against women is so common and widespread in every society, it is often considered a normal aspect of women's experiences. Violence against women includes physical, sexual, and psychological violence. Violence against women increases in situation of armed conflict taking distinctive dimension and meanings. As for example, rape against women is committed with an intention to shame, demean, warn, instill fear etc., towards the entire community by the 'Other' that is the enemy. In situation of armed conflict in Manipur women finds themselves at the receiving end of violence on four fronts – from the State (which includes the Indian army, police, and intelligence agencies etc.), militants/insurgents/non-state armed actors, men from the society, and violence within their own homes. As a result, not only are civilians and combatants killed in the conflict, but their lives are caught between multiple opposing parties, that is between state and non-state armed actors, and also between various non-state armed groups¹ based on their ethnic lines.

¹ The term Non-state armed actors/groups, militants, insurgents are used interchangeably in the thesis

It is a fact that one sixth of India's citizens live in armed conflict areas.² There are insurgency and ethno-nationalist movements in the Northeast, secessionist/independence movement in Kashmir, and the Maoist movement in many regions of India. In India's Northeast, intra-state violent conflict is presently seen mainly in the four states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura. State policies, ethno-nationalism, identity, ethnicity, poverty, inequality, and perceived injustice are considered to be some of the causes of the violence. The Indian government denies that there are armed conflicts in India.³ This is because once an area is declared as an armed conflict region, the Geneva Conventions and International laws can apply. But it uses the phrases like 'disturbed areas', 'insurgency infested', 'law and order problems', 'national security' etc. Unfortunately, the Indian state's responses to these insurgent groups have been the perpetual reliance on military methods and enactment of anti-people laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. The beginning of political violence in the Northeast could be traced at the time when the Indian army was deployed to quell the Naga uprising in 1953, which intensified to an armed conflict.

The historical background to the violent situation in the northeast region is unique. The British kept the region effectively 'excluded' or 'partially excluded' from governance, creating a development lag. The political violence in the region began after the induction of the army in Nagaland in 1953, which intensified incipient insurgency/non-state armed groups. No other part of India or South Asia has been subjected to such a prolonged violent struggle as the Northeast India. Violent and

²Anuradha M. Cheney and Kamal MitraChenoy, *Maoist and Other Armed Conflicts*, (New Delhi: penguin Books, 2010), 1.

³ Government of India's response to Security Council, CEDAW Committee, 37th Session, 15 January – 2 February, 2007.
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw37/response/cedaw.c.ind.q.3.add.1%20single.pdf> accessed on November 1, 2014.

vociferous demands by various ethnic groups for independence and for new states in the Northeast have been occurring over the past five decades. The fire of insurgency has for long engulfed this strategic region for the last half century or more making it one of South Asia's most disturbed regions.⁴ Bound by four countries, namely Bhutan, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar, the region has immense geopolitical significance.

Manipur is a strategic state bordering Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram towards the north and west and Myanmar to the east and south. Insurgency movements in Manipur are grounded in ethno-nationalism and have a historical setting. There are over 39 armed insurgent groups of all communities combined operating in Manipur, and out of which there are 4 active Naga insurgents operating in Manipur. Their demand ranges from separate statehood within India, independent nation state etc. There are two main struggles for ethno-nationalism namely the Meiteis and the Nagas in present Manipur. Since my study is on the Naga Women of Manipur, it will be majorly confined to the four Districts⁵ of the Naga inhabited areas: Tamenglong District, Chandel District, Senapati District and Ukhrul District. Most of the insurgent groups are engaged in fights against what they call the 'Indian occupational forces'. They also fight among themselves based on their ideological differences which further leads to ethnic rivalries. Further, this response of the Indian state has led to a growing dominance of the military over civilian authorities, with simultaneous

⁴Lakshmi NepramMentschel, *Armed conflict, Small Arms Proliferation and Women's Response to Armed Violence in India's Northeast*. University of Heidelberg: South Asia Institute, Department of Political Science, (December, 2007), 3. <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/7867/1/Mentschel2.pdf>, accessed on: 20/10/2012

⁵ There is an ongoing protest and dialogue between the Government of Manipur and the United Naga Council (UNC) on the recent creation of 7 new districts by dividing the 9 existing districts in Manipur on December 9, 2016 by the then Congress Government of Manipur just before the state election. The UNC alleged that with the creation of new districts namely Sadar and Jiribam, would encroach the ancestral land of the Nagas.

decline in democratic institutions and the freedom and rights of citizens. Prolonged and unsuccessful counter-insurgency operations resulted in the destruction of society.

Violence against Women in Armed Conflict

Conflict is a struggle between individuals or collectives for status, scarce resources or power. The aims of conflicting parties are to assert their values or claims over those of others. Conflict is embedded in a society and cannot be isolated from the current political and social issues. Thus, conflict is not disintegration of a particular society or its economy: it is more of a re-ordering of society in certain ways. However, conflict becomes problematic when it takes the shape of an armed-conflict. It is generally agreed that conflict means a collapse of the rule of Law. An examination of the situation of armed conflict in Manipur reveals this reality. The simple fact is that militarization has replaced democratization in the state. Armed conflict is dominated by men and military ideologies that worked against women's rights. Cliffe and Rock opine, Once violent conflict (militarized violence) emerges it transforms itself and all around it- the state, livelihoods, economy and social relations. Armed conflict refers to the violent use of arms by groups of people to resolve disputes or fulfill demands which are historical in nature related to its economy, culture and society. It is given in *TheUppsala University Conflict Data Program* that armed conflict "is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar

year.”⁶The word ‘conflict’ in the thesis would denote a violent confrontation and armed clashes between the state and non-state actors and also between various non-state actors.

Conflict generates certain kinds of power relations and imbalances. In Manipur’s context, for example, violence against women is not just the exercise of power over women. When the armies are raping the women, it is also a symbolical gesture of raping the nation to which the women belong to because the women embody cultural purity of the nation.⁷ As a result of unequal gender relations, women generally face more violence than men. The situation is the same in conflict areas as well where many women are unsafe and have no arms to protect themselves. It is an interesting point that in the post-war period, men are left with “either an eroded sense of manhood or the option of a militarized masculine identity with the attendant legitimization of violence and killing as a way of maintaining a sense of power and control.”⁸

The United Nations’ 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” Among the many acts this declaration explicitly covers are marital rape, sexual abuse of female children, sexual harassment,

⁶ Uppsala University Conflict Data Program.
<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/nro/images/img/sdg-16-oslo-2016/erik%20melander.pdf>, accessed on Jan.11, 2014

⁷ Amani El Jack, *Gender and Armed Conflict: Overview Report* (University of Sussex: Bridge Institute of Development Studies, 2001), 16. http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/sites/bridge.ids.ac.uk/files/reports/CEP-Conflict-Report.pdf?bcsi_scan accessed on: 12/03/2011)

⁸ Boutatsjeard, et al., *Gender, conflict, and Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2001), 36

trafficking of women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated by the state (such as rape used as a weapon in war).⁹ The United Nations definition is important because its focus is on the responsibility of the state to commit to the human rights of women. It acknowledges violence against women as gender-based. We need to recognize that violence against women is not only personal and private but is an institutionalized violence aided by the state.¹⁰ Women's rights then participated in the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993, which then conformed that "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

The root cause of gender-based violence is in the heart of the prevailing systems of discrimination that accepts the oppression/subordination of women by men. As recognized in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly's 1993, violence against women is historically manifested. The power imbalance between men and women has led to the subordination of women in almost all aspects of life.¹¹ In July 1993, India ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereafter, CEDAW). Yet, it has not ratified the Protocol Optional to CEDAW.¹² Recent conflicts have highlighted the systematic and specific targeting of women for sexual such as rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, sexual torture and other forms are used as methods of warfare.¹³

Studies have shown that no one approach adequately explains the phenomenon of violence against women. Berry Levie gives three perspectives to explain what

⁹ Berry Levie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 4

¹¹ Marie Vlachovd and Lea BIASON, eds., *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005), 4.

¹² Optimal Protocol creates access to justice of women at the international level, if justice is denied at the national level.

¹³ Marie Vlachovd and Lea BIASON, eds., *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005), 14.

causes violence against women: Individual Perspectives, Socio-cultural perspectives, and Multidimensional Perspectives. Individual perspectives are the most popular individual-focused perspectives social learning theories, which explain violent behavior as learned from one's environment. According to these theories, individuals learn how to behave from their exposure to and experiences of violence. When they observe or imitate behavior, they learn what those around them consider appropriate. Boys are most likely to imitate their father, and girls to imitate their mothers, through the socialization processes that take place in families. When their behavior is responded to and reinforced, they become conditioned to continue the behavior. This process is responsible for the intergenerational transmission of violence, in which violence against women is learned from one generation to the next.¹⁴ Violence is learned as a tactic for getting what one wants or expressing emotions. Social learning has provided a valuable perspective on the complex issue of the influence on children/people of exposure to violence in the community and family as well. This exposure along with other factors, but not by itself- is recognized as to have had a significant impact on the behavior of the people who later use violence. This theory can be applied to violence against women in the conflict zone Manipur, where the violence committed by the Indian state forces for the last six decades are learned and reproduced by various non-state armed groups, including the civilians in the society. According to one eighty-year-old lady respondent, the present situations of rampant armed violence, particularly against women are of foreign origin.

It is argued, when observed from the socio-cultural point of view, that violence against women is generated through its social systems and cultural practices.

¹⁴BerryLevie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 17.

Those who propagate this explanation assert that men harass women “because they can”. What they mean by this is that men who are likely to harass women for any sort of reason can easily escape any form of punishment or rebuttal by means of justifying his actions in a socially sanctioned manner.¹⁵

Multidimensional Perspectives explanations of violence against women integrate social factors, such as class, gender, and culture, with individual characteristics, such as family history, psychopathology, and alcohol or drug use. Reluctance of institutions to intervene, cultural approval of violence, and social constructions of ‘masculinity’ contribute additional dimensions. These perspectives view violence against women as complex, with individual and social factors combining to cause and perpetuate the problem.¹⁶

Feminist theory focuses on power, on gender, and on the structure of relationships in a male dominated, patriarchal structure. According to feminist theory, the main factors that contribute to violence against women include historically male dominated social structures and socialization practices teaching men and women gender specific roles. Feminist have analyzed dynamics of oppression and the intersection of gender, race, and class to explain that the institutionalization of violence against women in political, legal, and economic systems make it visible and acceptable.¹⁷

Gender and gender-related social roles define masculinity and femininity as clusters of traits that depend on what is considered masculine in societies and cultural groups. An example is the belief that men are dominant, strong and rational and

¹⁵BerryLevie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 20

¹⁶BerryLevie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 22

¹⁷BerryLevie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 21.

that women are passive, irrational, weak and submissive-traits that are not naturally exclusive to men or women, but that vary with culture, class ethnicity, and other social statuses. In western societies, rape was originally seen as a property crime against the father or husband of the victim, resulting in diminished value of the women (damaged goods). This view of women as property has been established historically as being the root cause of social attitudes about rape and domestic violence.

Carole Sheffield writes in her essay “Sexual terrorism,” that the cornerstone of patriarchy is to keep the female body its control.¹⁸ According to her, violence against women so pervades our culture that we have to learn to live with it as though it were natural order of things. It is a system by which males frighten and, by frightening, control and dominate females, and has the same characteristics as any other forms of terrorism.¹⁹ This includes non-violent sexual intimidation and the threat of violence as well as overt sexual violence. Its instrumentalization is reflected in laws, in rape during war/conflict, and in slavery worldwide. Whether we conceptualize this social phenomenon as a patriarchy or as male supremacy or male domination, feminist view it as a consistent pattern of ideological and structured practices that serve to justify and perpetuate men’s oppression of women.

According to Marie Vlachovd, conflicts have highlighted the systematic and specific targeting of women for sexual violence. Rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other forms of sexual violence are used as methods of warfare. Sexual violence are part of calculated policy to attack the

¹⁸Carole J.Sheffield, “Sexual Terrorism.” 409.
http://web.pdx.edu/~matg/Sociology/Gender_&_Sexualities_files/Sexual%20Terrorism%209.2.pdf,
accessed on: 02/21/2013

¹⁹Ibid, 410

heart of the society, to demoralize, bring about fear, punishment and dishonor the opponent. The manner of sexual violence is often such as to maximize the humiliation of the victim and their family and the community, and to ensure a level of powerlessness and fear that will remain entrenched.²⁰

DuncanMcDuié-Ra, describes the Violence against women in the Northeast as a 'Frontier Culture of Violence', which according to him is a violence which is very different from the violence against women experienced by women in other parts of India. The violence against women in other parts of India are largely internal familial, which are mostly based on rigid religious norms, dowry, dependency in marriage, and caste inequality.²¹ In the frontier culture of Violence, women experience both internal familial and external non-familial forms of violence. But the latter form of violence is much higher than the national average. The reason for this is the whole-sale militarization of the region, which includes the Indian armed forces empowered by the AFSPA and the local law enforcement agencies including the police, commandos etc., on the one hand, and the various Non-State Armed groups. Frontier culture of violence is not simply a product of the armed forces and the AFSPA; it is enhanced and reproduced by ethno-nationalist militant groups.²² Violence against women is also perpetrated by members of rival communities and also from their own communities. This frontier culture of violence is one of the major causes of violence against women, but of course not the only reason. According to him, high militarization also indirectly causes violence against women by propagating the frontier culture where violence is routinely, frequently witnessed, and normalized.

²⁰Marie Vlachovd and Lea Biason,eds., *Women in an Insecure World: Violence against Women Facts, Figures and Analysis*(Geneva: Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2005), 14.

²¹, Duncan McDuié-Ra, "Violence Against Women in the Militarized Indian Frontier: Beyond "Indian Culture" in the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Women," *Violence against Women*, Vol. 18, Issue 3 (March 1, 2012), 323.

²²Ibid, 333

Aims and Objectives of the Thesis

- a) To highlight historical background of the Indo-Naga armed conflict
- b) To understand the ways/meanings of how violence is being used by both the state and non-state armed actors
- c) To understand the impact of armed conflict and violence, particularly on women
- d) To examine how women have been able to cope with the conflict situation
- e) To document, share and analyze the effect of a history of suffering

Need for the study

In the recent past, studies on the predicament of women in the conflict zones including Manipur have been done. These studies, however, focused only on the state as perpetrators of violence. The thesis makes an attempt to explore and understand this violence and have also tried to connect the state and as well as the non-state actors to the violence against women in Manipur as both of them have equally contributed to it. Through this thesis I hope to make a contribution to a better understanding of violence against women in the conflict areas and its detrimental impacts. This study would also be relevant to understand the situation of women in conflict areas especially where Naga situation is considered as one of the longest unresolved armed conflicts.

Research Questions

What is the status of women in Manipur, especially the status of the Naga women of Manipur? What is the reason for the conflict in the North East Region (NER) with special reference to Manipur? What are the kinds of violence that women encounter in

Manipur? Does the violence in Manipur affect its women in special ways? What are the kinds of violence against women perpetrated by the state? What are the kinds of violence against women perpetrated by the non-state actors? What is the impact of this violence on the women in Manipur? How do the women in Manipur tackle this violence? What is the impact of the violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors in the domain of economy and social relations? What impact does the violence produce with regard to the mental and physical health of the women of Manipur?

Research Methodology

My field work is concentrated mainly on the four Naga Hill districts of Manipur. The field work is based on anecdote, in-depth interviews and participatory observations, personal testimony, and personal experiences of victims/survivors. I also talked to activists and leaders of women's organizations. The topic and style of interview varied, depending on situations/settings and the case of violence. The respondents particularly women come from all walks of life and different social and economic backgrounds. Some of them were educated while others had no formal education. Some of them were young, some old and married while others were widows/half-widows. Some lived in urban areas, while most lived in rural areas/villages. The study also made an attempt to include some non-Nagas who had been victims of violence and armed conflict in Manipur.

The fact that I was an insider, I believe, gave me the advantage to get to know crucial details and daily life of the respondents, particularly that of women. A few individuals did not want to be interviewed, and also at times the respondents for various reasons did not really want to open up or give in or discuss the details. A total of 75 respondents were open for interview and gave a detailed stories on my research,

who were approached through proper appointments and equal number or more people were interviewed in a non-formal environment where they narrated their stories. To ensure that the participants would feel comfortable for the interview, many a times I have to show them my University identity card as a proof that I am a research student of that particular university. This only shows that the situation in those areas had worsened so much that the people did not have trust on anyone. There is also always that lingering suspicious possibility or fear that an individual could be an agent/member of any group, be it state or non-state.

Hence, I tried my best to have a good rapport with the interviewee. I also informed them that their names, address and other details were to remain confidential and would not be used for any other purpose than the study. Since some were not comfortable with a tape recorder, I jotted down important notes while interviewing them and at times wrote down notes from memory. Both this method of recalling and writing down the notes from memory has its own drawbacks, as I cannot remember every word or everything exactly as narrated to me by my interviewee. Many a times they would ask me questions like what is the point in trying to know their stories. What would they get out of it? They also said that they have shared their stories many times earlier, but nothing changed for them, they never received any kind of help, be it in the form of justice, rehabilitation, counseling or any other assistance. It was indeed painful and saddening to hear their stories.

For my field work interview, I got help from friends, neighbors, civil society groups, local women groups and guides. The study also includes interview with non-state actors, Manipur state police, health officers, Naga civil societies and organization, Naga women's organizations. Tertiary sources were also used in some cases to confirm the stories. The secondary sources of data include books, articles,

documentaries, reports, newspapers, magazines, and internet sources. I had to approach the participants many times. I also sought for help from their family members and friends who convinced them to talk to me. Moreover, I also sought help from the women leaders of local organizations to understand the situation more comprehensively.

Since I am from Manipur and have many friends in the region, I have been hearing stories of violence for a long time. My interest to research on conflict and violence grew out of such a situation. In the beginning, it looked like collecting the data would be an easy task for me. But the issue needed to be dealt very delicately and an extensive effort had to be put in.

Limitations of the Study

During my research I faced multiple and inter-related problems to my research. Working on sensitive issues which involve both the state and non-state actors, I had to be always careful in times of my travel and interview for field work. Or in other words many a times I could not push myself beyond certain limits for the safety of myself and more importantly of the interviewee due to external factors. It took me a long time to build a rapport with the participants. There were some few women who agreed to meet and discuss with me their experiences but they backed out and refused to talk to me later for their own personal reasons.

Literature Review

The book *Gender, War and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*²³, edited by Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via is divided into five sections. The book looks at the political workings of the masculinities and femininities in war and conflict zones, in military institutions and militarized cultures from a feminist perspective. The authors of the book are of the opinion that the wars of the 21st century is very much different from that of the past wars, as the recent wars are more of an intra-state conflicts, which is a combination of war, organized crime and a massive violation of human rights. With this change, the participation of women in war and conflict has also increased. However, the authors argue that in spite of women's active participation, their position have not changed much, as their participation is defined and shaped by the patriarchal interest of men and their needs. It is argued that women experience war and conflict very differently than men and in diverse ways as victims, survivors, and peacemaker. They also argued that even though women are very much involved in the peacemaking making process by taking the initiative, the actual negotiations and decisions are mostly taken by men.

In Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman's, edited book *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*,²⁴ (2004) they talk about the feminist analyses of the politics of gender relations in conflict and war. The authors in the book write about the lives of women in violent conflict zones and its impact on women on issues of exile, displacement, refugees, sexual violence etc. The book says that women are not only victims of war

²³ Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, eds., *Gender, War and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*. Sandra Barbara: Praeger, 2010)

²⁴ Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)

and conflict but are also active agents to it, even though women have actively participated in war and conflict it has not really brought about women's emancipation and empowerment. The book concludes by raising issues on concept such as globalization, human security, human rights which needs to be looked from a feminist perspective in order to understand the gender relations they imply.

*Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in Middle East: A Palestinian Case-Study*²⁵ (2009) by Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian addresses the situation of Palestinian women in militarized zones where women are not just victims/survivors, but are in the forefront as warriors and resisters. But with conflict, patriarchalism also increases in both public/private spaces and institutions thereby resulting in rigid control of women's lives, activism, mobility and their voices.

In *Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond*,²⁶ the first section of the book talks about the politics of construction and meanings of borders in the post colonial in south Asia. The process of rigid marking of a nation state involves not only the marking of geographical areas, but also to the marking of bodies of the people by using a different sort of laws which involves the use of violence. The second section talks about the people particularly women living in the border areas of Bengal, Northeast India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and their vulnerability on issues such as migrants, laborers, the trafficked, sexually transmitted diseases etc. The third section of the book deals with border laws and one of such is the laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and its impact on women in the northeast.

²⁵ Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Militarism and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

²⁶ Paula Banerjee, *Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010)

Laxman Murthy and Mituvarma edited book, *Garrisoned Minds: Women and Armed Conflict in South Asia*,²⁷ is divided into three parts and the book is an outcome of 12 young journalists trained to research and write on women issues in conflict – in frontlines of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Bolochistan and Federally Administered Tribal areas of Pakistan (FATA); post conflict Nepal; and the decades of conflict in Northeast India. The first section talks about how the United States invasion on Afghanistan led to shifting of Taliban and Al Queda into the regions of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. This has led to the rise and control of the terrorist on the lives of the people, particularly on women based on the Sharia law. Not only are millions of people displaced, but women are forced to marry militants, to quit schools, and also stopped women from working in agriculture sector. The second part talks about the tremendous participation of women in Nepal in the Maoist revolution with a big dream to bring about change and to be empowered. They eventually found themselves being sidelined in the post-conflict resolution, and to come back to their old way of life in a patriarchal society without much change. The third part narrates stories of how it is like to be woman in conflict region like Manipur where the human rights are violated by both the state and non-state armed actors. It also narrates the spirit of women in defiance and standing in forefront to fight against impunity and injustice.

K.S Subramanian (2007) in the book *Political Violence and Police in India*,²⁸ looks at selected patterns of increasing political violence in India and argued against unnecessary deployment of Central Police Forces to tackle internal/local problems. To him the central police forces are also one of the major violators of human rights in today's India, and the most affected are the weaker section of the society including

²⁷Laxman Murthy and Mitu varma, *Garrisoned Minds: Women and Armed Conflict in South Asia* (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2016)

²⁸ K. S Subramanian, *Political Violence and Police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007)

the Dalits, Adavasis, and women and children in conflict zones. He strongly propagated for an effective administrative and police reforms in India. For example, Intelligence Bureau (IB) which is a British India origin still continues to function in its old guidelines and style.

In Jaideep Saikia's (2007) edited book titled *Frontier in Flame: Northeast India in Turmoil*,²⁹ he gives an account of the reasons for conflicts in various states of Northeast. According to him, in Assam and Tripura the root cause has been the issues of illegal Bangladeshi migration; in Meghalaya it has been the rise of have and have-nots and the control of local economy at the hands of non-locals; in Manipur there are as many as 30 armed groups which are based on ethnic lines and their demands ranges from independence to protection of one's own community. The book also argues that behind all these armed conflict, there are foreign hands in play from neighboring countries by supplying arms and resources.

The book, *Maoist and other Armed Conflicts*³⁰ addresses the various issues of armed conflicts that is happening in India: Kashmir, Maoists in different parts of India, and also the conflicts in Northeast India. The book critiques the Indian state policies and militaristic approach in dealing with various conflicts with trying to understand the historical, political and social nature of the demands. It also explores the gendered aspects of conflicts where women and their bodies become the centre stage in which conflict is waged upon.

²⁹ Jaideep Saika, *Frontier in Flame: North East India in Turmoil* (New Delhi: Penguin Viking, 2007)

³⁰ Anuradha M Chenoy and Kamal Mitra M. Chenoy, *Maoist and Other Armed Conflicts* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2010)

*Strangers of the Mist*³¹ Sanjoy Hazarika is among one of the finest book written on Northeast armed conflict. It gives a historical background for the rise of various insurgent groups in the Northeast. The author rightly argued that issues in Northeast are no longer just about insurgency and law and order problem as seen by the Indian state. There are many other serious issues which also need to be taken into account such as illegal migration from Bangladesh and Nepal, flow of drugs from Myanmar leading to the rise of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS in the region. The author argues that Indian State policies in the Northeast should change and evolve by looking into every aspect of economy, development, environment, security and human rights, or it will only worsen.

Sanjib Baruah's, (2009) edited book titled *Beyond Counterinsurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*³², analyzes the various reasons for armed conflict and militarization in Northeast India. Authors in the book argue that the various policies used by the Indian State in dealing with conflict have been state centric, hence as a result it has totally failed. To bring about peace and normalcy in the region, the state should try to understand the background and history for the reasons of conflicts, and establish an accountable rule of law where there is respect for human rights and well being, and not by counter violence.

Trouble Periphery: Crisis of India's North East.³³ by Subir Bhaumik, is a book based on the experiences and primary documentation of the author who had worked on the northeast. As a journalist and a citizen of the region, the book gives a far sighted insight by having had access to both the state officials and non-state actors. The north

³¹ Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from Northeast* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011)

³² Sanjib Baruah, *Beyond Counter Insurgency: Breaking Impasse in Northeast* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009)

³³ Subir Bhaumik, *Trouble Periphery: Crisis of India's North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2009)

east has been neglected by the state ever since India's independence over the question of identity, governance and development. As a result, there is the ethnic armed movement in seven states of north east who not only fight against the state, but also fight among themselves, and this has brought about a breakdown in the political, social or economy of the society. There is also an increasing rise of warlords like groups who are involved in smuggling and trafficking of drugs, arms, and extortion in the name of taxes. The book gives a strong message to the Indian state and its agencies. It also asks the Indian state to give a sincere thought to bring about a lasting solution, and that can happen only with political negotiation, and not with use of force and violence.

Wasbir Hussain's book titled *Homemakers Without Men: Assam's Widows of Violence*³⁴ is the first non-state armed group in Assam was formed in 1979, known as the United Liberation Front of Ahom (ULFA) with an objective to achieve sovereign socialist Assam because they believe that Assam was being exploited by the colonial Indian government of their resources such as oil, tea and other natural resources. With the formation of ULFA, many other ethnic communities like the Bodos, Dimasa, Karbi also began to form their own non-state armed groups for their respective community interest. In the process, a low intensity armed conflict resulted in Assam. The violent conflicts are either against the state or inter ethnic community. It is in the context of this conflict that the author, a journalist narrates the stories of widows in Assam whose husbands have been killed. The perpetrators and victims belong to the state and non-state, politicians, students' union leaders and ordinary civilians. It tells stories of how widows have struggled to come out of victimhood to being a survivor,

³⁴ Wasbir Hussain, *Homemakers Without Men: Assam's Widows of Violence* (New Delhi: Indialog Publications, 2006)

fighting against all odds to start a new life, not only for themselves but for their children.

The book, *Highway 39: Journeys through a Fractured Land*³⁵ by Sudeep Chakravati. (2012) is among one of the best book to have been written on conflict region of Northeast. Highway 39 as the title of the book is a highway in a conflict zone which starts from Numaligarh in Assam crossing Nagaland and ending in Moreh, a town bordering Myanmar. The author had travelled in these two states extensively trying to understand the conflict situation and the impact that it has had on the people on the region. In the course of his journey the author had met different people from all walks of life including the civilians, the survivors of violence, human rights workers, officers in the military and the police, politicians, senior bureaucrats and insurgent leaders. The author is a former journalist, a writer and an activist, and someone who has a good connection with the people from the region. The book narrates stories of sexual violence, abduction, fake encounters and other collateral damage. The author argued that the conflict in the region is largely due to the Indian state policies, and hence for the conflict to end there should be a sincere political dialogue and negotiation between the stakeholders and the Indian state. As long as that is not happening, it will be the poor innocent civilians who will continue to suffer the most.

The Naga Saga: A Historical Account of the Sixty Two Years Indo-Naga War and the Story of Those who Were Never Allowed to Tell it,³⁶ written and published by Kaka D. Iralu . (2009), is a third edition of the book, *Naga and India: Blood and Tears*, which was first published in 2000. The book is considered as a classic by many

³⁵ Sudeep Chakravati, *Highway 39: Journeys through a Fractured Land* (New Delhi: Fourth Estate, 2012)

³⁶ Kaka D. Iralu, *The Naga Saga: A Historical Account of the Sixty Two Years Indo-Naga War and the Story of Those who Were Never Allowed to Tell it* (Kohima: Kaka D. Iralu, 2009)

Nagas. It is a well researched book which gives facts, documents, and letters of the Nagas in relation with the Indian State. The book gives an account of the history of the Nagas and the genesis of the Indo-Naga conflict. The book argues that the Nagas had made it very clear to the British India Government that they do not want to be part of India after independence, but the Indian state forcibly colonized the Nagas in spite of their wish. The book also give facts about how thousands of Nagas were killed, tortured, burned alive, their houses and granaries burned, kept in concentration camp etc. and those who dodged the concentration camps were hunted down. As a result of this, thousands lost their life out of starvation and diseases. The author narrates the horrific stories of how women, children, men were raped and sodomized by the Indian army in numbers.

Temsula Ao, in her book (2006), *These Hills called Home: Stories from a War Zone*³⁷ tell stories of Naga people who have been living in armed conflict for decades. She beautifully captured and narrates diverse stories of how people irrespective of their background and their role in the Naga society are impacted by armed conflict in diverse ways. One of the worst affected are the Naga women who have been raped and killed by the Indian armed forces. The stories remind each and every Nagas not to forget their history, and the people who have sacrificed immensely for the cause of Naga identity and their struggle for independent nation.

*Women in Naga Society*³⁸ (1998), an edited book by Lucy Zehol is a collection of work on women of various Naga tribes. It tries to examine and understand the position of Naga women by looking into their role in social, political, economic and religion from a traditional to modern context.

³⁷ Temsula Ao, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2006)

³⁸ Lucy Zehol, ed., *Women in Naga Society* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 1998)

Deepti Priya Mehrotra's (2009). *Burning Bright Irom Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur*,³⁹ is an outcome of the authors close interaction with Irom Sharmila since their first meeting in 2006 in Delhi. It tells the story about how an ordinary woman began her hunger strike for the withdrawal of AFSPA from Manipur after an incident in November 2000 where ten innocent people in a bus stop were mowed down by Indian security forces in Malom Village, near Imphal. It gives an account of how in her fight by non-violent means against the mighty Indian state, the government of Manipur responded by putting her in house arrest for refusing to eat and also force-feeding her through a nasal tube.

Chapter Plan

The dissertation is divided into six chapter including the introduction and conclusion.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The first chapter gives a brief introduction of the thesis. Description about the location of the case study and it also gives a conceptual and theoretical framework of Violence against Women. It is then followed by the aims and objectives of the study, methods used for the study, and limitations of the study. The second part gives the review of literature.

Chapter 2- A Socio-Economic and Political Context of Manipur

The second chapter will give a brief profile and demographic of Manipur state and its people. It will also aim to give the genesis of history of Indo-Naga armed conflict.

³⁹ Deepti Priya Mehrotra, *Burning Bright Irom Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009)

Chapter 3- State Violence against Women

The third chapter tries to look at the various kinds of violence committed by the State against women, particularly the Naga women in Manipur. It begins by arguing that many parts of India including Manipur is a militarized state where the Indian State forces function with total impunity backed by Acts such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Acts, 1958. It also discusses counter-insurgency and their methods: extra-judicial killings and fake encounter, renegades and death squads, collective punishment of civilians, lootings, destroying of properties, occupations of public buildings, inciting violence, militarizing civilians and control of media. It also discusses the positive contribution of India army.

Chapter 4- Insurgents/Non-State Armed Actors Violence against Women

The fourth chapter tries to discuss the various kinds of violence perpetrated particularly against women in Manipur by armed groups. It looks at why the non-state armed groups target the civilians particularly the women in situation of armed conflict. The chapter also discusses various other forms of violence such as: bombing in public places, ethnic cleansing, murder for ideology, extortion, abduction and forced recruitment of children, and moral policing.

Chapter 5- Social and Economic Impact of Violence

The fifth chapter, looks at Impact of Violence and the Response of Women, shows the varying ways of how violence in conflict zones has had an impact on the lives of the women in Manipur. It looks into the issues of: widows, conflict wives, half-widows, impact on children, trafficking of women, prostitution, sexually

transmitted diseases. It also looks into the role of women as activist, peace keepers, organizers, and also tries to look into the role of women's organization such as the Naga Women's Union Manipur and the Naga Mothers Association.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

The fifth chapter ends with the conclusion, where it summarizes the overall argument of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Socio-Economic and Political Context of Manipur

Manipur is located in the Northeast of India. It was formed in 1972 with Imphal as its capital. The state shares its territorial boundaries with Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam and the sovereign state of Burma. Before the colonial rule and the formation of the Indian state, Manipur was a kingdom ruled by Ningthouja, a dynasty that dates back to 34 AD.¹ In 1826, the Kingdom of Manipur became a protectorate state of the British Indian Empire after the Anglo-Burmese War that ended with the treaty of Yandabo. The Kingdom of Manipur had sought the help of the British to protect them from Burmese invasion.² And in 1891, the Kingdom of Manipur was formally annexed by the British after the Anglo-Manipuri war. In 1907, a law called Rules for the Management of Manipur was introduced.

According to the provision of the law, a Manipur state Darbar of eight members was to be elected for the administration and the Darbar was to be headed by a British Indian Civil Service officer. On August 11, 1947, when the British were leaving, Maharaja Bodhchandra abolished the Darbar and signed the Instrument of Accession and Standstill Agreement with the Dominion Government of India.³ But at the time of the merger, there was a voice of dissent in the hill areas. A. Daiho, a young Mao Naga tribe,

¹ K. Manikchand, "The Evolution of the Meitei State, 1918-1926," eds., Aheibam Koireng Singh and Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam, *Annexation of Manipur 1949* (New Delhi: Forward Books, 2014), 21.

² Falguni Rajkumar, *Rainbow People: Reinventing Northeast India* (New Delhi: Mana Publication, 2011), 90.

³ H. Bhuban Singh, "The merger of Manipur," eds., Aheibam Koireng Singh and Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam, *Annexation of Manipur 1949* (New Delhi: Forward Books, 2014), 79-82

was asserting for tribal rights and independence.⁴ It is important to note that the Ningthouja dynasty ruled over the Meiteis only and had no control of the tribals who had their own traditional laws and customs.

The independence and sovereignty of Manipur remained uninterrupted until the Burmese invaded and occupied it for seven years in the first quarter of the 19th century (1819-25).⁵ Manipur came under the British rule as a princely state in 1891 as the last kingdom to be incorporated into British India. Manipur was one of the first territories within South Asia to have a democratic legislature elected on the principle of universal adult suffrage. Manipur Legislative was constituted in 1948 as a self-governing representative democracy.⁶ From 1947 to 1949, the state of Manipur functioned as a virtually autonomous state, until the decision of the Government of India to take over Manipur. On 21 September 1949, Maharaja Bodhchandra was summoned to Shillong, capital of the then Indian province of Assam, and placed him under house arrest and forced him to sign a Treaty of Accession merging the kingdom into India. The Legislative Assembly was dissolved and ceded to the Republic of India on October 15, 1949. This was done against the will of the people and the elected members of Manipur Assembly. Subsequently, Indian armed forces were sent to Manipur, and the Manipur Legislative Assembly was dissolved on 15 October 1949 with the use of force.⁷ Manipur was a union territory from 1956 and later became a full-fledged state in 1972, with a

⁴ Gangmumei Gamei, "Ethnic Response to Merger: A Historical Perspective," eds., Aheibam Koireng Singh and Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam, *Annexation of Manipur 1949* (New Delhi: Forward Books, 2014), 43.

⁵ Manipur History and Geography," *India Government Archive*.

https://archive.india.gov.in/knowindia/state_uts.php?id=17 accessed on July 3, 2018

⁶ A. Bimol Akoijam, "Another 9/11, Another Act of Terror: the 'Embedded Disorder' of the AFSPA," eds. Monica Narula et al., *Bare Acts* (New Delhi: CSDS, 2005), 484.

⁷ *Ibid*, 484.

legislative assembly consisting of 60 elected members, of which 40 are from the Meitei community and 20 from the tribal groups.

The major characteristic of Manipur's demographic composition is that of 'pluralism.' Anthropologically, the people of Manipur may be classified into four cultural groups: Meitei, Meitei Pangan (Meitei Muslim), Naga, and Kuki-Chin. The Meitei and Meitei Pangan form two third of the state's total population and inhabit 10 percent of the total geographical area of 22,327 square kilometers.⁸ As per the 2011 census, the total population of Manipur is 27,21,757. At present, the state has 33 Scheduled Tribes, 7 Scheduled Castes, the Meitei, and Meitei Pangan, besides people from different parts of the country. The Scheduled Castes are Loi, Yaithabi, Dhobi, Muchi or Rabidas, Namsudra, Patni, and Sutradhar.⁹ Today, Manipur comprises a number of communities and aptly represents the idea of plurality. It can well be projected as a miniature India.¹⁰ According to the 2011 census, an aggregate of 58.9% live in the valley and the remaining in the hills.¹¹

The people inhabiting the state are from various social groups, with distinct languages and cultural practices. Lucy Zehol (1998), in her book *Ethnicity in Manipur: Experiences, Issues, and Perspectives* writes that the people inhabiting the state can be categorized into two: the tribal communities and the non-tribal communities. The major social groups are the Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis. The Meitei population forms the non-tribal group, and the Nagas and Kukis form the tribal groups of the state. The people

⁸ <http://www.mapsofindia.com/census2011/manipur-sex-ratio.html> accessed on Sept. 19, 2018

⁹ <http://socialjustice.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Scan-0012.jpg> accessed on Sept. 20, 2018

¹⁰ http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Jrp/pdf/133_6.pdf accessed on Sept. 19, 2018

¹¹ "Population of Manipur 2017," <http://indiapopulation2017.in/population-of-manipur-2017.html> accessed on June 1, 2018

racially belong to the Mongoloid race and linguistically belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. Each of the social groups follows different set of religions, which adds to the staggering diversity of the state. The Meiteis predominantly practice the Vaishnavism faith of Hinduism. However, a section of the Meiteis, called Meitei Pangan, practice Islam. The Meiteis are the main inhabitants of the valley. The tribal communities comprising the Nagas and Kukis practice Christianity, which was introduced in the hill districts during the colonial era. The tribes living in Manipur inhabit the hill tracts although some tribes have settled in the valley.¹² According to the census report of 2011, the total population of Manipur is 27, 21,757. The state has a Sex Ratio of 987 for each 1000 male. The literacy rate of the state is 79.85 percent. The male literacy rate is 86.49 percent, while the female literacy rate stands at 73.17 percent.

The sociopolitical condition of Manipur has been volatile since the formation of the Indian state. Though at the surface level the heterogeneous society of Manipur appears to live along the ideology of the Indian nation of unity in diversity as pronounced by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, the ground reality is that there is hardly any sense of assimilation of these communities in the postcolonial Indian state. The state of Manipur has witnessed many ethnic conflicts between the tribal and non-tribal communities as well as among the tribal communities. The root cause of the various ethnic conflicts can be attributed to territorial disputes. However, it is important to note that the current ethnic tensions amongst the various communities had their origin prior to colonialism. Bhagat Oinam writes that the Naga-Kuki conflict started over the issue of settlement. The Nagas' stand on the territorial conflict is that the Kukis

¹² Lucy Zehol, *Ethnicity in Manipur: Experiences, issues, and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Regency Publication, 1998), 36-39

are residing on the land that belonged to the ancestors of the Nagas. From this point of view, the Kukis are intruders in the Naga ancestral land. This territorial dispute erupted in ethnic clash in the 1990s, resulting in the massacre of 750 Kukis in the state.¹³

The ethnic tension between the tribal and non-tribal groups is also attributed to the territorial dispute. The Naga national movement, which envisions to form a Greater Nagaland, has created tension in the states of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Naga society, which consists of various tribes, is widely distributed in the states of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Subir Bhaumik in his book *Troubled Periphery*, writes that the vision of the Naga nationalists to unite all the Nagas from various states of Northeast and form Greater Nagaland has generated fierce opposition from the political parties and insurgent groups from various states in Northeast, because if Greater Nagaland is created many states will lose their territories.¹⁴ In an interview by the Hindustan Times dated 16th July 2018, the Chief Minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh, gave his view on the Indo-Naga peace accord saying that the state of Manipur encourages a peaceful solution in the larger interest of the nation, but the peace agreement cannot sacrifice the state unreasonably, and the state of Manipur will take extreme steps should the territorial integrity be compromised.¹⁵ The Government of India is in dilemma to solve the Naga crisis. The act of considering the demands of Greater Nagaland would trigger counter extreme steps by the Meitei community in Manipur. And if the

¹³ Bhagat Oinam, "Patterns of ethnic conflict in Northeast : A Study of Manipur," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, issue 21 (May 24-30, 2003), 2035

¹⁴ Subir Bhaumik, *The Troubled Periphery : Crisis of North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication), 91-92

¹⁵ Prashant Jha, "Will take 'extreme' steps if Naga deal hurts Manipur's interests, says CM Biren Singh," *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, July 16, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/will-take-extreme-steps-if-naga-deal-hurts-manipur-s-interests-says-cm-biren-singh/story-swlel3X102FjTbKCS5ToPM.html> web accessed on July 20, 2018

Government of India fails to meet the demand of the Nagas, the peace talk might be called off and insurgency could be on the rise again.

The social unrest in Manipur is also triggered by separatist tendencies among the various communities in the state. In 1964, a section of the Meitei society who aspired to be independent, formed the separatist group United National Liberation Force (UNLF). Another separatist group called the People Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (the ancient name of Manipur) was also formed. The aim of these groups was to fight for Manipur's independence, to prevent infiltration of outsiders and establish a classless society. These two groups are influenced by communist ideology.¹⁶ Apart from the tribal Nagas who are fighting for an independent nation, the Kuki tribe also formed the Kuki National Front to demand for a separate homeland for the Kukis. These various insurgent groups have clashed among themselves because the territorial claim of one group compromised the territorial integrity of the other group.

Economy

Manipur is largely underdeveloped with little or no sign of modernization. The state of Manipur was and continues to be an agricultural economy. Lokendra in his book *The Unquiet Valley: Society, Economy and Politics in Manipur*, writes that agriculture was the mainstay of the state economy. People in the hills practiced slash and burn or jhum cultivation, and the peasant communities in the valley practiced wet rice agriculture. These agricultural methods are still practiced in the state due to the lack of industrial development and agricultural reforms. Rice is the staple food of the people.

¹⁶ Subir Bhaumik, *The Troubled Periphery : Crisis of North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication), 110

The other major crops produced in the state are maize, potatoes, chillies, pulses, oilseeds and sugarcane.¹⁷ Thiyam Singh Bharat in his essay *Poverty in Manipur*, opines that the problem of poverty in Manipur is largely because of social tension and unrest. The social unrest impact the infrastructure of the state in terms of power, transport, and communication, which further contributes to the industrial backwardness of the state. Bharat further writes that during the 1990s, which was the postliberation period in India, Manipur has not been able to attract investment from outside the state and has recorded low per capita flow of investment when compared with other states in Northeast India. According to Subir Bhaumik, the federal government of India has failed to invest in the region's infrastructure development to entice lucrative market force, the government has only pumped in funds to sustain the region's economy. The Vision 2020 program has identified three necessary conditions for the economic progress of the region -- law and order, good governance and diplomatic initiatives with foreign countries bordering the Northeast.¹⁸

Though industrially backward, the state's cottage industry has been on the rise. The boom in cottage industry is seen in the field of handloom. According to the handloom census in 2009-10, there are 1.9 lakh looms and 2.04 lakh handloom workers in Manipur. The handloom industry is a major source of income to the people and the workers in this industry are mostly women. Apart from handloom, the food processing industry is also gaining momentum. The success of these small industries has captured the attention of the state government. As an initiative to promote and increase the skills

¹⁷ N. Lokendra Singh, *The Unquiet Valley: Society, Economy and Politics in Manipur* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1998), 10

¹⁸ Subir Bhaumik, *The Troubled Periphery : Crisis of North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication), 231-232

and sales of merchandise, the state government has opened up galleries and shopping complexes for the industries to expand.¹⁹ The role of women in the cottage industry has had a long history in Manipur. The *Ima Keithel* (which can be translated as Mothers' Market/Women's Market) is an evidence of unmatched influence that women have in the economy. According to a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) news report, this market was active since the sixteenth century. This market came into existence when the Kingdom of Manipur was under invasion from China and Burma. As men busied themselves in war, women took up the responsibility to support their families. As mentioned earlier, although social tension and insurgency have affected the economy of the state, the *Ima keithel* continue to operate successfully despite the activities of insurgency and the presence of security forces.²⁰

Status of Women

Women in Manipur have been active in both public and private spaces. Both the tribal and non-tribal communities have witnessed the contribution of women in the political arena. The Zeliangrong Naga uprising against the British to establish Raja Raj during the 1930s was spearheaded by Rani Gaidinliu after the leader of the Naga uprising Haipou Jadonang was captured and executed in 1931 by the British.²¹ In Manipur, a major contribution of women to the politics of the state was through the movement called *Nupi Lan* in 1939. The movement resulted from a famine-like situation in 1939 caused by

¹⁹ "Handloom is Fast growing Industry in Manipur." < <http://kanglaonline.com/2016/07/handloom-fast-growing-industry-in-manipur/> > Accessed on July 10, 2017

²⁰ Mother's Market: The India Bazaar run entirely by Women, *BBC News* <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-32793952/mother-s-market-the-indian-bazaar-run-entirely-by-women> <accessed on Sept. 24, 2017.

²¹ Raman mahdevan, "Zeliangrong Naga uprising of 1930-32: a brief summary," *Indian history congress*, vol. 35 (1974), 253

bad weather, which forced the women folk to demand a ban on exporting rice. Manipur during the British Raj was a source of food grain to other provinces under the British²². The movement was a success and this event is seen as a watershed moment for women in politics especially Meitei women. When Manipur attained statehood in 1972, women were active in politics. This is evident in the first Manipur Legislative Assembly election where three women contested in the election.²³ Though it was a healthy sign that women are participating in politics, women have not met much success. The latest case in the last state election in 2007, where human rights activist Irom Sharmila contested and lost in the election despite her sacrifices to remove the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is an illustration that men still continue to wield political powers.

The Naga society is a patriarchal society like other societies of India. The Naga women also contribute to the family income by engaging in handicraft, weaving, handloom, agriculture, and small-scale industries. The Naga women when compared to the mainland Indians enjoy a better social status because the Naga society is egalitarian. The Naga women are not governed by the dowry system, Purdah, strict religious norms, etc. as practiced in other parts of India. There are no strict restrictions on women's movement, food habits, attire, widow remarriage, etc. To take example of the Zeliangrong Nagas in the institution of marriage, Chaoba Kamson in his book *The Zeliangrong Social system and Culture*, states that widow remarriage is a normal custom in the Zeliangrong society. A girl child is socially active among her peers and she has the liberty to choose her life partner. Marriage is not seen as a burden by the girl's family. A

²² Sanamani Yambem, "Nupi Lan: Manipur Women's Agitation, 1939, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 11, No. 8 (Feb. 21, 1976), 326.

²³ O. Kulabidhu Singh, "Participation of Manipuri Women in Elections: A Critical Analysis," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (JULY - SEPT., 2009), 899.

man who wishes to marry must pay a bride price. The bride's family will set the bride price and the bridegroom's family will accept the demands of the family without negotiation. The bride price could range from shawls to monetary coins.²⁴

The stark contradictions of the cultural practices of the Nagas to the cultural practices of the rest of the India have generated many responses and opinions. For instance, Furer-Haimendorf, writes that women in the more civilized part of the country would envy the women in the Naga society because of the social and personal freedom that they enjoy in the society. Likewise, Xaxa (2008) and Banerjee (2010) have argued that this visible gender equality which is mostly obvious in the public sphere is most often being talk about in the context of the Northeast and is often envied by the women of other regions of the country.

But despite the many liberties that a woman has, there is always the preference for a male child. However, this does not mean a girl child is unwelcome. A female child is welcomed because she helps her mother in household chores and takes care of other siblings. As a patriarchal society, the woman does have some societal expectations. In the Zeliangrong Naga tribe a husband could even divorce his wives if they failed to give birth to sons. And the irony of the Zeliangrong Naga Raj movement which aimed to overthrow the British rule over the Nagas is that even though it was led by Rani Gaidinliu, the village council of the Zeliangrong Nagas has no position for women, and it still continues to be a patriarchal institution. The village council of Zeliangrong is called the Pei. The council consists of *Nampou* (village Chief), *Taku* (Chief Priest), *Namgakpou*

²⁴ Chaoba Kamson, *The Zeliangrong Social System and Culture* (Imphal: Ashangpam Publications, 2015), 198-206

(Administrators) and *Napmupou* (treasurer). All these posts are held by men, and the women have no say in the Pei/village council.²⁵

In the Naga patriarchal society, if a girl is the only child, the family ancestral property goes down to her father's closest male kin, mostly to the eldest uncle's son. However, properties bought and acquired by parents themselves can be transferred to the daughter(s). In the recent past, some well-to-do parents have started giving their daughters lands during marriage not because they thought their daughters have every right like their male child to be given property, but by using the term Gift. The daughters are given lands just because the rich parents can afford it. So, it doesn't touch the core issue of women to have the right to inherit in a Naga society. Even if they are given as gifts, those will never be the same compared to the size given to the men. The land is given more out of courtesy or pity for women rather than as a right.

The concept of participation in a modern society is a viable theory of democracy. Political participation is necessary for a democratic political system. Despite constitutional and legal provisions, Naga women in Manipur have not been represented in the Parliament or the State Legislative Assembly. Politics is considered solely as men's affair, while women are considered incapable. The only elected Naga woman in the state legislative assembly was the late Hangmila Shaiza in 1990. The political participation of women is negligible or even curtailed as they do not have the privileges enjoyed by men to be a part of the village council.

²⁵ Chaoba Kamson, *The Zeliangrong Social System and Culture* (Imphal: Ashangpam Publications, 2015), 249

As mentioned earlier, the state of Manipur is a conflict-ridden one. And in this conflict zone, it is the innocent people who suffer the most, especially the women and the children. The trauma that a woman goes through in the conflict is insurmountable. In this conflict zone, women do not only lose their husbands, children and siblings, but they are also victims of human rights violations. However, it is important to note that women are not just passive human beings in this conflict zone. The Indo-Naga War is one of the world's longest running conflicts and has affected the whole of Northeast for a period spanning seven decades now. The problems of insurgency, counterinsurgency and state violence against the people have brought about a lot of human rights violations in the Northeast. In this peace-forsaken place, women have played an active role to bring about peace in this volatile war zone. In 1984, the Naga Mothers Association was formed with the aim to mediate and promote peace between the Indian government and the Naga separatists. Among the Meitei, the *Meira Paibi* group became a vigilante group, actively campaigning against the abuse of power by the military forces.²⁶ The women are vibrant both in the public and private space, though they are regarded inferior to men. They have largely contributed to the society and the politics of the state. But in the midst of all these political turmoil, the crimes against women have been on the rise and this thesis attempts to explore the violations against women.

A Brief History of the Indo-Naga Armed Conflict

Nagas are the indigenous people inhabiting the Naga Hills of the Indo-Myanmar frontier. They share common historical roots and socio-cultural, political and economic

²⁶ Joyati Bhattacharya, Gender, Peacemaking in the Case of Northeast India, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (JAN. - MAR., 2010), pp. 233- 239, p. 235.

affinity with one another. The Naga hills are bounded by the Brahmaputra valley of Assam in the west, the lower Himalayas in the north, the Chindwin River of the Myanmar in the east and the Imphal Valley of Manipur towards the south. The consolidated Naga hills are located between 93° E and 95° E longitudes and 24° N and 27°N latitudes.²⁷

Today, the Nagas in India spread across Nagaland and parts of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur. They can also be found in Kachin and Sagaing divisions in Myanmar. In Manipur, the Naga population is distributed in four districts; Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel. Of the 40 Naga tribes, 16 Naga tribes inhabit Manipur, namely: *Anal, Tangkhul, Maring, Mayon, Monsang, Lamkang, Chothe, Mao, Poumei, Maram, Thangal, Tarao, Chiru, Kharam, Koireng and Zeliangrong.*

Before the arrival of the Britishers, the Nagas had no connection with India or Burma (Myanmar). The first contact with the British was in 1832. The battle of Khonoma marked the growing influence of the Britishers on the Nagas in 1879, and an unwritten peace treaty was negotiated between the British and the Nagas under which the Naga homeland was excluded from the British India and later came to be known as the “Naga Hills Excluded Area”.

The Indo-Naga conflict is an ongoing conflict between the Indian state and the Naga separatists demanding for a sovereign Naga nation romanced as *Nagalim* (Greater Nagaland). The Indo-Naga conflict is not a postcolonial development, rather its origin is deeply rooted to the British colonial rule. It was the British rule that shaped the unlikely

²⁷ U.A. Shimray, “Women’s Work in Naga Society: Household Work, Workforce Participation and Division of Labour,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (April 24-30, 2004), 1698.

destiny of India and the Nagas, who had no social or political relationships with each other. The colonial rule in the hills districts of Northeast India was very ambiguous in the sense that the hills were never completely a part of British nor separate entities from India. Colonial laws such as the Inner Line Regulation, which is a part of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873, became a barrier to overcome in postcolonial India. According to Atola Changkiri in her book *Socio-Cultural and Political History of the Nagas*, the Inner Line Permit was introduced into the hills districts which were partially controlled by the British. The hostile relationship between the plains inhabitants and the tribes over trade and territorial encroachment often involved the British government in disputes with the frontier tribes. In order to prevent this, the government formulated a regulation for the British subjects to acquire a pass from the deputy commissioner should they cross into the inner line.²⁸ Such colonial law continued to operate even after colonialism, which created a sense of otherness.

It was the British which gave the nomenclature 'Naga' an official stamp to the diverse group of tribes through its colonial practices of mapping and census. Before the advent of colonialism in the Naga Hills, the tribes referred to each other with different names, and the language a tribe spoke was seldom comprehensible to the other tribes. Colonialism in the Naga Hills happened in two waves in the nineteenth century. The first, which was unsuccessful, happened in the aftermath of the Anglo-Burmese War in 1826. Following the war, the British felt the need to restore the civil government of the protectorate princely states of Assam and Manipur, and protect the states from another possible Burmese invasion. To avert any threat from the Burmese, a direct route between

²⁸ Atola Changkiri, *Socio-Cultural and Political History of The Nagas* (Dimapur: Heritage Publishing House, 2016), 83

Assam and Manipur was needed and this was only possible by penetrating through the Naga Hills.²⁹ Aosenba in his book *The Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict*, writes that the Nagas were colonized only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century after the battle of Khonoma in 1879, where the British successfully subjugated the Nagas. Following the subjugation, military expeditions, mapping and survey provided a proper written history of the Naga people.³⁰

During the colonial period and post-independence India, the contiguous Naga Hills were divided into different political boundaries. Neivetso Venuh writes that the administration of the Naga Hills was done through the system of indirect rule. The British did not impose the British India civil and criminal penal code and allowed the hills to be governed according to their traditional laws and customs³¹ The Naga Hills was never fully subjugated by the British and some of the hill tracts, such as Tuensang, was never administered by the British. The British were never interested in the Nagas, as there was nothing they could benefit from them coupled with a difficult terrain. But since the Nagas were disturbing their tea plantation business in Assam by raiding from time to time, they decided to control the Nagas. Even then, not all Naga areas were conquered or controlled.

With the spread of education and exposure of the Nagas, a Naga consciousness as a community began to take its shape by the beginning of the twentieth century. Aosenba states that the first sign of political awakening among the Nagas started with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918. The formation of this political body was the result of

²⁹ Gordon P. Means, *Tribal Transformation: The Early History of the Naga Hills* (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2013), 67-68

³⁰ Aosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 67-68

³¹ Neivetso Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 48

the fervor of nationalism witnessed by the Nagas who had been sent to Europe as Labor Corpse during the First World War. Upon their return, the Naga labor force felt the necessity to unite all the Naga tribes under one platform with a socio-political vision.³² The Naga Club's first political act was the submission of a memorandum to the Simon Commission, a commission sent by the British Government to India to study constitutional reforms following the exhaustion of the 1919 Act, which covered 10 years from 1919 to 1929. Naga Club, the first Naga political organization, was established in 1918. And on January 10, 1929, it filed a memorandum to the Simon Commission at Kohima demanding for autonomy after the British leaves India. And this has been regarded by many Naga historians as the first Naga declaration of nationality and their first demand for independence. Also, following the tender of the Naga Memorandum to the Simon Commission where the Nagas had refused to be included in the reformed scheme of India, the British India Government in recognition of their demand put the Naga Hills under "excluded area" in the India Government Act, 1935.

This memorandum is regarded as the nascent point of Naga Nationalism. Neivetso Venuh argues that the memorandum highlighted the anxiety of the Nagas to be brought under the constitutional reform scheme of India. The anxiety of the Nagas arises from the lack of political, social and cultural affinities with the larger Indian subcontinent. The hostile relationships of the Nagas with the neighboring British India princely states of Assam and Manipur made the Nagas unsettled about the proposition to come under the suzerainty of people who had never conquered and subjugated them. The memorandum also expressed the problem of assimilation with India due to the lack of social affinities

³² Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 33-34

of the Nagas with the larger Indian population composing of Hindus and Muslims. The food habits and the foreignness of the Naga languages rendered a social relation that was incompatible with Hindus and Muslims. But the biggest anxiety comes from the cultural advancement of the Indian state as the Nagas feared that the introduction of foreign laws and customs would supersede their customary laws which are suitable to them.³³

The memorandum drawing on the political and cultural history of the Nagas with the Indian state voiced their disapproval to be included in the reform scheme of India and instead requested to be under the direct governance of the British Government. The memorandum request to Simon Commission manifested in the Government of India Act 1935. The British recognized the Nagas' claim to be treated separately from the British India Act 1935 and renamed the phrase 'Backward Tract' of the Government of India Act 1919 to 'Naga Hills Excluded Area', which was to be administered directly by the Governor of Assam. British officials, like Colonel Wedgewood, felt that the Nagas should not be drawn into Indian politics as the Indian politicians do not have interest in them unlike the Europeans who were compassionate about the Nagas.³⁴

The idea of separating the Nagas from the Indian politics was also suggested by Sir. Robert Reid, the governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942. Realizing the impending departure of the British from India, Sir Robert Reid recommended a scheme to carve out a 'Trust Territory' comprising of Naga Hills areas of Assam and the upper part of Burma inhabited by tribal people to form a Crown Colony. In his proposal Reid wrote, "We have

³³ Neivetso Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 58-65

³⁴ Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 24

no right to allow this great body of non-Indian animist and Christians to be drawn in the struggle between Hindus and Muslims, which is now and will be in the future politics in India. They cannot be left to Indian political leaders who have neither knowledge, interest, nor feeling for the areas.”³⁵ After the end of the Second World War and the successful defense of the Japanese invasion in Kohima, Sir Charles Pawsey established an organization called the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in April 1945 as a way to repay the Nagas for their loyalty and contribution in the war. The major aim of the council was to bring together and unite all the tribes.³⁶

The Naga Hills District Council soon transitioned into a political organization known as the Naga National Council (hereafter, NNC) in February 1946, and since then, the NNC has been active as the main political organ of the Nagas. The NNC in its formative stage was ridden with contradictions. The NNC requested the Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, for an interim government to look after the Naga Hills. According to the NNC, the Government of India was to act as the guardian power for a period of ten years at the end of which the Nagas would be free to determine their political future.³⁷ On 19th June 1946, the NNC in its memorandum demanded the inclusion of the Naga Hills in an autonomous state of Assam in free India and the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate. However, in October 1946, they demanded the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills to restrict the entry of any member of any political party from India into the Naga Hills without the consent of the NNC. And on the

³⁵ As quoted in Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 27

³⁶ Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 35

³⁷ Neivetso Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 64

issue of sovereignty, the radical group led by A.Z. Phizo (hereafter Phizo) demanded complete independence, while the moderate group (mostly government servants) favored the continuation of the relationship with the Government of India till the Nagas are in position to run a modern government. The third group came with the idea of Nagaland should be included compulsorily under the British Government for a specific period of time.³⁸

But by the turn of the year 1947, the NNC started claiming an independent status for the Naga Hills and on 20th February 1947, it submitted a memorandum to the British Government stating that the Naga people were independent and their country was not subjugated by the Ahom kings of Assam. And Nagaland was never part of Assam. Prior to the advent of the British, Nagaland was never part of Assam or India at any time. The Nagas reasoned their right for a separate form of government based on their ethnicity, social life, laws and customs, and religion. In the memorandum, the NNC made an appeal to the British government to set up an interim government under the Indian government for a period of ten years at the end of which the Naga people should be free to choose the form of government they liked. The British India government could not respond to the appeal and only recommended the Nagas to discuss the matter to the Advisory Committee for the aboriginal tribes which would visit Kohima. The Advisory Committee visited Kohima on 20th May, 1947, but the committee could not come to an agreement with the NNC's demand for independence. In an attempt to break the impasse, Sir Akbar Hydari, governor of Assam along with Sir Chales Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, drafted an interim government agreement known as Hydari Agreement. The

³⁸ Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 36-37

9th clause of the agreement was controversial because the Nagas assumed that after the ten years of interim government they would have their sovereign state, whereas the Government of India asserted that it would mean Nagaland would remain as a protected state of India even after the expiry of ten years. The uncertainty of sovereignty after the period of ten years created a divide in the NNC. The moderates conceded to the agreement, but the radicals led by Phizo did not accept the Hydari agreement as it fell short of self determination of the Nagas.³⁹ The radicals in the NNC, led by Phizo, went to Delhi in July 1947 and put forward their views that the Nagas be left outside the Indian Union when the British leave India.

Phizo and five members of the Naga National Council met Mahatma Gandhi in July 1947 at New Delhi, and conveyed to him that the Naga Hills should be independent of India. Gandhiji said, “The Nagas have full right to be independent. When the Nagas said that they would declare their independence on 14th August, Gandhiji asked, “Why not now? Where is the need to wait until the 14th August? I became free a long time ago.”⁴⁰ Gandhiji also said, “If you do not accept that India is your country, no one can force you. I personally think that in a way Naga Hills is yours, it is mine too. If you say that it is not mine, then the matters end there. I subscribe to the idea of brotherhood of man, and do not believe in forcible union. If you do not wish to be part of India, nobody can force you. The congress will not do this.”⁴¹ But unfortunately, with the death of Gandhiji the aspiration for an independent Naga nation was met with forceful occupation

³⁹ Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 38-41

⁴⁰ Harish Chandola, *The Naga Story: First Armed Struggle in India* (New Delhi: Chicken Neck, 2012), 162

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 162

by the Indian army. And in 14 August 1947, NNC led by Phizo declared Naga independence.⁴²

After India's independence, the Naga Hills were again divided into Assam and Manipur using the divide and rule policy of the British. On 16th May 1951, Nagas called for plebiscite in which 99.9 percent voted in favor of an independent homeland devoid of domination and political control of any sort. And in March 1952, this decision was put forward to Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, but he did not accept the plebiscite. As a result, Nagas launched a civil disobedience movement and refused to pay taxes and boycott the first general election of 1952. No Nagas stood for election and no Nagas voted. As a result, the NNC was banned by the Indian State. The Nagas again boycotted the 1957 general elections.

Nevertheless, the Nagas welcomed Nehru's decision to visit Kohima. On March 30, 1953 when Nehru along with Indira Gandhi and U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, visited Kohima, Nagas had gathered in large number to welcome them, and also submit a memorandum on the Naga issue to Nehru. But Nehru made sure that he would not allow or receive any form of memorandum. But to their surprise, under the command of the Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Satyen Barkatoki, people who had lined up by the roadside to welcome them were beaten and driven away.⁴³ With the news of the barbaric police act, the Nagas under the leadership of the NNC, who had gathered in large numbers decided not to welcome and left the ground slapping their bottoms. The Prime Minister tried reasoning with them saying: "Please sit down! I have to speak to you! Sit

⁴² Neivetso Venuh, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), 67-68

⁴³ Harish Chandola, *The Naga Story: First Armed Struggle in India* (New Delhi: Chicken Neck, 2012), 15

down!” In spite of his plea, the Nagas humiliated him in the presence of his friend Nu. Following this, Nehru declared, “Even if the skies fall and rivers run red with blood, as long as I am Prime Minister I shall never allow another division of India.”⁴⁴

As a lesson for the boycott, the Assam administration came down heavily on the Nagas. The Government of India imposed the Assam Maintenance of Public Order (Autonomous Districts) Act 1953⁴⁵ in the Naga Hills. This saw the beginning of the Indian army being sent to the Naga region. Police and army were sent to raid and ransack villages and to capture leaders of the NNC and its members. In the process, innocent villagers, including government officials were beaten up and jailed, while others were killed. As a result of the inhumane crackdown, NNC members and youths began going underground to avoid arrest and became militants. In addition, the Assam government in 1953 passed a law imposing forced labor in view of emergency in the Hills where people were put to work on road building and clearing of jungles. It should be noted that the problem in the Naga Hills was a political one, but the Indian government’s approach was a military one. Since then, the Naga Hills have been under the martial laws.

Thus, the reign of terror against the Nagas began by burning villages, random killings, sexual violence against women, and disappearances of Naga youths at the hands of the Indian forces. To escape from all these atrocities, many went into hiding and subsequently became militants. Apart from the indiscriminate killings, the Government of India also introduced various counter-insurgency operations of which the Village Regrouping was one of them. The strategy was to remove the people and transfer them to

⁴⁴ Harish Chandola, *The Naga Story: First Armed Struggle in India* (New Delhi: Chicken Neck, 2012), 16

⁴⁵ Assam government dispatch Assam police into the Naga Hills to destroy the new rising Naga armed actors who have stood against the Indian state

a camp highly monitored by the army to prevent the people from supporting the insurgents. However, this village grouping had major consequences. Subir Bhaumik writes that the Village Regrouping operation of the Indian army uprooted about 35 percent of the population in the Naga Hills. This disrupted the agricultural practice of people who were dependent on farming for their livelihood. The uprooted people without resources were pushed into drug trafficking, violent crimes, and prostitution.⁴⁶

After India's independence, the same colonial policy of divide and rule was imposed by the Indian state on the Nagas in spite of their constant pleas and demands. The common aspiration of the Nagas to live under one political umbrella was never given any attention. And even before the creation of the state of Nagaland, Nagas living in Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, in the Naga People's Convention (NCP) held in Kohima in 1957 pressed for the integration of Naga areas.⁴⁷ The 1957 convention was followed by another convention called Mokokchung Convention 1959. In 1963, the Government of India created the state of Nagaland as a full-fledged state of the Indian Union. This brought together the Naga Hills district of Assam and the Tuensang District of the Northeast Frontier Agency, while leaving out many Naga tribes of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal.

Even though statehood was granted to appease self-determination of the Nagas, the conflict between the Indian army and the Nagas did not stop. On the request of Phizo, Reverend Michael Scott, an Anglican priest and anti-apartheid activist, traveled to

⁴⁶ Subir Bhaumik, *The Troubled Periphery : Crisis of North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication), 70

⁴⁷ U A. Shimray, " Naga integration Movement: A Historical Perspective."

<https://nagalandjournal.wordpress.com/2013/04/22/naga-integration-movement-a-historical-perspective-by-u-a-shimray/> accessed on March 10, 2014.

Nagaland to hold peace talks with the Indian Government. With the assistance of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, the Peace Mission was formed in 1964. The task of the Peace Mission was to bring about the ceasefire between the Indian state and the Naga underground, and then to negotiate for a political settlement. The military operation by both the Indian security forces and the Nagas underground ceased on the 5th of September and the first ever Indo-Naga Peace Talks started on 23rd September 1964. But the peace talks were less than effective because the Naga nationalists refused to accept Nagaland constitution status within the Indian Union. In the fourth round of talks, Indira Gandhi suggested changes in the Indian constitution to give autonomous status to Nagaland, but the Naga nationalists continued their demand for independence.⁴⁸ After the failure of the peace talks, the Naga political scene returned to its earlier situation with aggressive military and insurgent operations. The military operations against the Naga insurgents climaxed at the Shillong Accord 1975 with the help of the church council to avert more atrocities committed against the civilians.

It is important to understand that the present Naga struggle for independence/autonomy is to bring together all the Nagas living in different parts of India into one political unit, and is not just confined to the Nagas of Nagaland. In 1963, when Nagaland state was created, Nagas of Manipur were not included in it, though they wanted to. This exclusion saw the beginning of many educated Nagas from Manipur participating in armed struggle. On November 11, 1975, a group of NNC leaders signed the 'Shillong Accord', wherein they agreed to give up arms. This was regarded as a sell-off and a betrayal by other Naga insurgent leaders as they were not consulted. A section

⁴⁸ Asosenba, *Naga Resistance Movement: Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2001), 68-78

of the NNC did not accept the accord and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980 to fight for Naga self determination. But this outfit split into factions due to the ideological disagreements among the leaders. The faction NSCM (IM) led by Isaac Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah, and NSCM (K) led by S.S Khaplang, continue to fight for the Nagas' quest for freedom. Of late, the NSCN (IM) has become the major organization to struggle for Naga self determination and the "Integration of all Naga inhabited contiguous areas under one administrative umbrella."

The Indo-Naga conflict may be at the crossroad today for a peaceful settlement, but the situation is still volatile. The uncertainties in the entailments of the final peace accord framework have left the people perplexed in the Northeast. Although there have been claims that the government is buying more time to come to a final agreement, the delay has also sparked fears on the functionality of the framework proposed. And also, there is equally the chance of the peace accord and ceasefire to break down if the demands of the insurgent groups are not met. The conflict has been raging in the Naga Hills for more than seven decades now, but the only two things that are reaffirming are: the Indo-Naga conflict shows no signs of ending, and peace and the rule of law are elusive realities.

Following the 'United Nations International Year for Indigenous People' in 1993, the NSCN (IM) began to participate in various United Nations gatherings. The Nagas began lobbying in international platforms about their rights and human rights abuses by the Indian State. As an outcome of their struggle and exposure, the NSCN (IM) was invited to represent the Nagas to the Unrepresented Nation and People's Organizations based in Hague, the Netherlands.

After decades of armed conflict and bloodshed, the Government of India signed a ceasefire agreement with NSCN (IM) on July 25, 1997, and this agreement came into effect on August 1, 1997. For the first time, the Government of India in July 2002 acknowledged and recognized the unique history and situation of the Nagas. After over 80 rounds of talks between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM), the historic “Framework Agreement” was signed on 3 August 2015 to bring about a political solution. The Government of India has informed parliamentary panel that a signed framework agreement with the NSCN (IM) after it agreed on a settlement within the Indian Federation with a “special status.”⁴⁹ However, the content and the dialogue of the agreement have not been made public. In spite of the ceasefire agreement and the framework agreement, violence between the two parties still continues to take place in a hidden way, and so do violence against the civilians particularly against women.

⁴⁹ Vijaita Singh, “Detail of 2015 Naga Agreement Emerge,” The Hindu, New Delhi, July 19, 2018 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/details-of-2015-naga-agreement-emerge/article24464239> accessed on August 20, 2018

Chapter 3

State Violence against Women

This chapter attempts to assess the State violence against women, especially the Naga women in Manipur. By State violence we mean violence perpetrated by state security machineries, which include the Indian armed forces and the Manipur state civil police. The chapter begins by providing a perspective on the Indian state as a military state and looks into the laws, particularly the AFSPA, 1958 and the so-called counter insurgency policies. The chapter attempts to argue that in a situation of heavy militarization, women and ordinary civilians are caught in between the state and non-state armed forces, with women more likely to be subjected to physical and sexual violence. It also attempts to look into the various kinds of violence meted out to women, particularly the Naga women in Manipur. The latter part of the chapter tries to find if there are any positive roles and contributions of the Indian army in Manipur.

India is a highly militarized state. The Indian army is the second largest standing in the world with over 1.36 million active personnel.¹ Internally, the army is deployed against insurgency in two peripheral areas – Kashmir in the north and the cluster of small states that comprise ‘the Northeast’ of India. India, in spite of being heavily militarized, is not regarded as a military state. Indian democracy does not extend to many parts of the Northeast, and Jammu and Kashmir. Stephen Cohen points out to the reality that so many Indians living under military rule, if not military law, makes India one of the world’s largest military dominated states, while being

¹ “2018 India military Strength”. https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=india , accessed on Jan 1, 2018

simultaneously the world's largest democracy.² The Indian state looks at armed conflict in India through the paradigm of national security. National security doctrines of India rely on militarism and they are justified in the name of national interest which is seen as the supreme interest of the nation. In doing so, the national security acts/laws such as AFSPA, 1958, are used indiscriminately in states such as Manipur at the cost of terrorizing its citizens. It looks at how the policies of the Indian State towards the Naga insurgents of Manipur have not only been a failure, but have rather alienated the people from the rest of the country due to the atrocities, injustice, and violations of their basic rights including the right to life.

Militarization and Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958

Militarization has been defined as an increased emphasis on military power by states to further their national interests, with the option of using military threats and war as an extension of politics. Militarization is the use of the military to solve political problems. It implies the growing dominance of the military over civilian authorities, with a simultaneous decline in democratic institutions and the freedoms and rights of citizens.³ In the armed conflict state of Manipur, the ideology of militarization becomes dominant for the state armed forces and insurgents. The civilian leaders too in their attempt to exercise military power to save the nation or to solve political problems, militarizes the society in the process.

The international arms trade is a significant indicator of global militarization.

Military expenditure by developing countries has increased four-fold since 1960 and

Indian armed forces are divided into 35 Divisions within 13 Corps. It is the third strongest in the world, next to China and United States.

² Stephen P. Cohen, 1990, "The Military and Indian Democracy" as quoted in *Insider/Outsider: Feminists in India Addressing the State's War*, 3

www.Cynthiacockburn.org/NorthIndiablog.pdf, accessed on March 12, 2015

³Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002), 4.

now accounts for 20 per cent of the world's total defense expenditure.⁴ This resource could instead be utilized for social and economic development. In a report released in 2018, it was reported that India ranks fifth in the world in terms of military expenditure behind US, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia. India spends about 63.9 billion dollars for its military operations and is regarded as the largest importers of arms globally.⁵ This amount is estimated to be about 1.58% of the nation GDP and 12% of the nation total budget for the year 2018-19.⁶

Anuradha M. Chenoy in her book *Militarism and Women in South Asia* (2002) defined militarization as an expansion on military power by states to fulfill national interests. The national interests are achieved using military threats and war as an extension of executive power. This militarization overrules the rule of law and the military are bestowed with powers over civilian authorities, and it also weakens the democratic institutions and suspend the freedoms and rights of citizens. In the armed conflict state of Manipur, the ideology of militarization becomes dominant for the state armed forces and insurgents. The civilian leaders too in their attempt to exercise military power to save the nation or to solve political problems, militarizes the society in the process.⁷

The AFSPA is a more severe version of the Armed Forces Special Powers (Ordinance) which was passed by Lord Linlithgow in 1942. This ordinance was implemented by the British government in India to suppress the Quit India

⁴ Ibid, 12

⁵ "News in numbers: India among to 5 military spenders in the world", May 03, 2018. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/6d0ZMHcw52fPpItJXvYCRK/News-In-Numbers-India-among-top-5-military-spenders-in-the.html> , accessed on May 10, 2018. Other top four spenders are US, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia

⁶ "Budget 2018: Defense increased by a mere 7.81 to Rs 2.95 trillion", Feb. 01, 2018 <https://www.livemint.com/Industry/710i08pNKRjliUBDXtpYIO/Budget-2018-Defence-budget-increased-by-a-mere-781-to-Rs2.html> , accessed on May 10, 2018

⁷Anuradha M. Chenoy,*Militarism and Women in South Asia*(New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002), 2

Movement. The AFSPA, formerly known as Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Ordinance, is a law that is exercised in most parts of the Northeast. This regulation sanctioned the armed forces with legal immunity in vicinities declared as Disturbed areas. In contrast to Lord Linlithgow's ordinance, wherein the power to take action was vested to an officer in the rank of Captain, AFSPA offers the same power to non-commissioned officers as well. Moreover, the earlier ordinance was meant for the whole of India unlike the present one. The parliament of India did not foresee the magnitude of problems that the act entailed and the then Home Minister GB Pant passed as a tentative measure after a debate that just lasted three hours in the Lok Sabha and another four hours of debate in the Rajya Sabha.⁸ At the time of the enactment, Rungnung Suisa, a Tangkhul Naga from Manipur and a Member of Parliament from Manipur, argued that the ordinances to militarized and send special armed forces will not solve the political problems.⁹ The act was further amended in 1972, giving the state government the power to declare any area as disturbed, and also applying it to all the Northeast states. The voices of the leaders who represented the people and region are ignored, and it still continues to do so. With just 26 Members of Parliament representing the eight Northeastern states to the Indian Parliament, Northeast has been sidelined in national politics, much like the geographical location which lies to the eastern frontier of India. And this has led the numerically weaker section to be sidelined in all major decision-making processes and their voices continue to remain unheard. This says a lot about Indian democracy and the predicament of the marginalized.

⁸ Paula Banerjee and Ishita Dey, *Women, Conflict and Governance in Nagaland* (Kolkata: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2012), 10

⁹ Amnesty International Working to Protect Human Rights Worldwide". <http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA200252005?open&of=ENG-2AS>, accessed on March 21, 2015.

In 1958, AFSPA was imposed on the Naga inhabited region, including the Naga regions of Manipur; and by 1980, the whole state of Manipur was declared as Disturbed Area. The law offers unrestricted power to all security forces in regions considered disturbed areas. The government defines the immunity power of the military in Disturbed Area under Section 4 of AFSPA.¹⁰ Under this section, a military officer has legal immunity and he has the power and authority to use force in order to maintain public order. The officer may use force after due warning even at the cost causing death of the person who is suspected to be a threat. This regulation also prohibits any gathering or assembly of people or to carry any weapon that can be potentially use as weapon. These weapons may include many day-to-day used objects such as spades, a piece of wood, machete etc. which people use daily in their day-to-day lives at home or in fields. It can further be argued on the fact that people living in the rural hill areas go to fields in groups. They also sleep in their fields for weeks during the time of cultivation as the fields are located miles away from their house making it impossible for them to traverse back on the same day. This back and forth travelling would only waste their time, the time that they could have rather spent in doing productive work in the fields. It must be noted that sometimes even a family would normally consist of five or more members, and hence, the section of the Act would even mean prohibiting a family to function normally.

The part B of Section 4¹¹ of the Act empowers the military personnel to raid and destroy any place that is suspected to be used by militants for the purpose of training, hide out and insurgent attacks on the state army. This military sanction has

¹⁰ "The armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958", Act 28 of 1958, 11th September, 1958.
https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session1/IN/COHR_IND_UPR_S1_2008anx_Annex%20XI_Armed%20Forces%20Special%20powers%20Act,%201958.pdf, accessed on March 15, 2015.

¹¹ Ibid

been grossly misused by the Indian army. The Indian armed forces taking advantage of the section have either destroyed or disrupted the normal functioning of many schools, places of worship, public buildings, houses etc. in the region. The presence of army camps inside Manipur University and in Kangla Fort (withdrawn after the Naked Protest) is just a few examples among many.

Section 4 (c)¹² violates certain fundamental rights given by the Indian constitution such as right against exploitation, right to property and constitutional remedies. This section allows a military officer to arrest a person without a warrant on the grounds of mere suspicion and regardless of whether there is any cognizable evidence against person for a criminal offence. This section also permits the use of force to arrest a person. Such military liberty and immunity in places where there the law enforcement forces are weak, the chances for constitutional remedies is not applicable to the common people. Section 4 (d) also empowers the army to enter and search any premises without a warrant in the context to make arrest or seize any arms, ammunition or explosive substance that are illegally kept for the purpose to use against the state.

Section 5¹³ of the act requires the army to immediate hand over the alleged suspect to station officer in charge of the nearest polices station of the nearest states along with the report of the circumstance under which the person was arrested. However, this procedure is hardly followed and the arrested people are mostly detained in the military camp subjected to extreme inhuman torture often resulting in death. Such practice of the army often leaves the families of the alleged convict to endlessly peruse the detainee without any positive result.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

The legal immunity given to the army is clearly stated in the Section 6 of the Act.¹⁴ This section maintains that no legal suit or proceeding would be charged against the army personal in the execution of this act. And legal prosecution against the army is possible only through the intervention of the central case. Any case of intervention of the central government is not seen since the implementation of the act. This section clearly questions the basis of equality before law as a citizen. A Bimol Akoijam in his essay *Production of the Extraordinary: Violent Self-infliction of a Political Paranoia* writes that AFSPA empowers the army to act as judge, prosecutor and executioner in a legal fiction of their own. Likewise Naorem Sanajaoba in his essay *Armed Forces (Special Power) Act: An Un-proclaimed Emergency and Gross Injustice* express the same sentiment. He writes that the special power act violates Article 21 of the constitution of India states which protects a person life or personal liberty. He further writes that this act does not enable the law to function normally but rather disenable law. He also challenged the legitimacy of this law as illegitimate because it has the potential to take lives of innocent people and appealed for the act to reviewed by the supreme court of India.

Seema Kazi in her book *In Kashmir: Gender, Militarism and the Modern Nation State* questions the legitimacy of the integration of the Indian state and the politics of Armed Forced Special Power Act, Enactment in India. Kazi argues that the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 implemented to acquire the secure territories that were not fully integrated into the Indian state during independence. The purpose behind is it to make not-India a natural territory in the Indian geo-national imaginary. But the irony is not the AFSPA did not serve the purpose for which it was

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ NaoremSanajaoba, "Armed Foces (Special Powers) Act: An Unproclaimed Emergency and Gross Injustice", *Asian Human Rights Commission*. <http://alrc.asia/article2/2006/12/the-armed-forces-special-powers-act-an-unproclaimed-emergency-gross-injustice/>, accessed on Feb 21, 2012

implemented. It rather created more ruptures within the Indian state and but it only prolonged the dispute of which is and which part is not of India.¹⁶

Since the implementation of AFSPA, the Indian state have endlessly pumped in paramilitary forces in Manipur as part of their counter-insurgency operations according to a report by Human Rights Watch, an estimated number of 14000 policemen and at least about 50,000 military and paramilitary personal have been deployed in the state of Manipur.¹⁷ The state has used the services of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Assam Rifles (AR), and the Indian Reserve Battalions (IRB). The function of the police is to maintain the law and order within the state, while the role of the military is to deal with war and defend the state from external aggression. But in the regions of so called disturbed areas the police and the military engage themselves as the protectors, the executioners, and the keepers of law and order.

There is a sharp and brutal contradiction between militarized masculinities of soldiers trained to kill or maim civilians in states like Manipur and their role as protectors to civilians in other parts of the country. The Northeast region has become the training ground for the Indian state military to learn the art of direct combat with the enemies, but unfortunately such policies mostly end up hurting the civilians. The Indian armed forces that are sent to the conflict regions are empowered even to violate human rights and commit crimes, which has been one of the main causes of violence

¹⁶ Seema Kazi, *In Kashmir: Gender, Militarism and the Modern Nation State* (New York: South End Press, 2010)

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¹⁷ *These Fellows Must Be Eliminated: Relentless Violence and Impunity in Manipur* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008), 22

against women in particular and the civilian population in general. In their effort to subdue the insurgents, many civilians and women get affected.

Violence against Women

The Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women by the UN in 1993 was the harbinger of an internationally agreed upon definition of violence on women. The United Nation defines violence against women as a violent act that results in harming or abusing a woman physically, sexually or psychologically. The nature of threats includes coercion or arbitrary deprivation of freedom in public or private life, including threats or such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.¹⁸ Violence against women constitutes an important feature of armed conflict in Manipur as the Indian security personnel enjoy impunity guaranteed by the AFSPA, 1958.

The violation of human rights against women in the Manipur state manifested in the form rape in the 1970s. The first case in the violation of this nature happened in Tangkhul Naga village in Manipur. A girl named Rose from Ngaprum village in Ukhrul district was gangraped raped by the Indian army on the night of 4th March. The perpetrators were ranked high in the military ranking. Major Pundir and Captain Nag of the Border Security Forces were the main accused in this incident.¹⁹ After the incident, the victim, Rose was rejected by her lover, family and community due to the deeply rooted patriarchal and cultural notion of the Tangkhul Nagas considering her to be no longer pure and clean. Rose committed suicide two days later while the perpetrators went unpunished due to insufficient evidence. Women who are raped

¹⁸ "The United Nation Work on Violence against Women".

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/news/unwvaw.html>, accessed on April 12, 2012

¹⁹ "Documenting Violations: A Commission of Enquiry looks into abuses of the AFSPA in Manipur", *Combat Law*, Vol. 2, Issue 1

frequently are shunned, ostracized, and considered unmarriageable and spoiled. She wrote a suicide note to her fiancé,

“Most beloved....

In a world seeded with envy, our love shall never bloom together like those flowers in the same stalk but we will bloom radiantly in that pure everlasting place of our true love. That I am leaving this world should not bereave you to utter melancholy. A life driven by gale of sorrow and unrequited words mortify my soul and leave me to choose only this lone way. For the days to come, we made promise to be one and together in our lifelong journey. But oh! My love I could not make for that moment! Oh! My life none is there to receive your lot.

What a pity! Oh! My vanquished soul every second bears the brunt of bereaved feelings, bringing me to the threshold of defeat. Even the tears which flow like an eternal spring now dries up. Those tears were the only image of my life. I will be remembering in those looming darkness of hell the tale of you and I. from dust to dust let this body embrace its birthplace; let the earth dissolve my remains. Oh! How enviable for that last glance, to see one last time of my image in your eyes, but alas! Fate deceives me at this last hour. I choose my own disgraceful death and lo! I will walk as an outcast forever. My love when you remember me, turn your eyes to the darkest horizon for I reside forever in the abyss of darkness. There, you will find me treading all alone with a heavy sigh of regrets in that long darkness.

Love of my life! Feeling of sweet remembrance of those long hearty laughs and sharing each other woes fill my memory. At the dead of this night, far from here my love a deep slumber will be taking you to pleasant dreams. My last wish to see your

visage shall ever remain unfulfilled as you are far from me...far across these ranges of hills.

For my lovely friends, though I am unable to write each a parting letter I plead to you to tell them my farewell. In this early morning, I am glancing over the distance of your lovely place Bungpa. Remember, my love how I wish to shower all my feelings and love, all I have for you like a cascade flowing down in your ocean of love. Have you ever received the letter I send you on 6-2-73? What could have happened for not returning any reply from your side? I have waited long and I am still waiting, but at the moment life steals away stealthily. Why and how did we ever get parted will only be known after you escape from this world. Oh Hell! Abyss of darkness! I loathe going that dark passage. No one shall ever know who betrays whom. The secret is entombed forever.

The life of a maiden tries up from blooming into a lovely flower and lays in the heathen...unadorned, unaccepted, untouched. Only regrets on my part for I am choke with words which I unable to tell you everything at this moment. What remains of the sad tale I will narrate to you closely in another lifetime, in another eternity? I will end with this note my love! That the only words that erupt from truest, innermost part of me is the saddest part of our parting, the story of our failure to be together again.

Your Rose”²⁰

Following the incident, Tangkhul Naga women formed an organization to make their voice more powerful and meaningful against the atrocities of Indian army towards Tangkhul Women and Naga women in general. On March 4, 1974, East

²⁰Malem Ningthouja, *AFSPA, 1958: Manipur Experiences*(New Delhi: Campaign for Peace and Democracy, (Manipur), 2010), 36-37. The suicide note was translated into Meitei and published in BharatkiLoilam Manipur by Pan Manipur Youth League in 1993. The Meitei version was again translated into English by Ms. R.K Smejita

District Women Association (EDWA) was formed. This association was later transformed into a Tangkhul Naga women organization in 1981 known as the TangkhulShanao Long (hereafter, TSL), which comprises all Tangkhul Naga Women. Today, the TSL engages not only in human rights issues and dignity of women, but also plays a very important role in promoting peace and women empowerment, and fighting against human trafficking etc. It was also during the 1970s that the Meitei women in the Valley of Manipur began to rally around the issues of drug abuse and alcoholism. By the 1980s, there came into existence of what is now known as the *MeiraPaibi* (Torch Bearer). This is a women's movement which was also formed to protect Meitei men from the Indian armed forces on issues such as fake encounter, arbitrary arrest, and extra judicial killings.

Studies have shown that there is an intimate relation between militarism and sexuality. The study illustrates that sexual aggression is crucial part of military violence. The act of rape demonstrates the masculinity of the state. The armies are the embodiment of the state and the soldiers are the representation of the state.²¹ In militarized states, women become primary targets of violence. This is often legitimized by governments and armies to create conditions of fear, traumatize and dehumanize civilian populations to achieve total dominations. "Military environment is inherently masculine and misogynist. Male bonding in peer groups contributes to hyper masculine settings, such as military in which men bond in brotherhood, and prove their masculinity to one another, by objectifying or sexually coercing or assaulting women". In these circumstances men who might not rape individually do

²¹ Berrie Levy, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2009), 27

so in a group that often pressure men to fit into the distorted and stereotyped ideal of the sexually aggressive, masculine man.”²²

According to Anuradha Chenoy, “In many nationalist discourses the nation is depicted as the ‘motherland’. The language of nationalism is itself gendered and the image of the nation is often linked to the mother or mother goddess. As national identity is equated with gender, race and color, women become identified with the nation and their bodies used to reproduce the boundaries of the nation and as transmitter of national culture. Since women are identified as territory and linked with the ‘honor’ and control of this territory, rape has always been committed during the period of war and conflict. Here the act of the aggressor, violating the honor of the enemy, is symbolized as violating the national/community honor of the ‘other’ – enemy.”²³ And it is through the use of this symbolism that women are being raped by soldiers in conflict regions.

For example, in Gujarat, a distorted history was used to promote the imagery myth of virile, violent Muslim man and the victimized Hindu women. Hindu women purportedly in danger of rape were conflated with ‘Mother India’, and the fictionalized history of the rape of both became the justification for the rape of Muslim women. There was little doubt that such hate propaganda contributed to widespread sexual abuse of Muslim women during inter-communal violence in February 2002.²⁴

²² Ibid, 27.

²³ Anuradha M.Chenoy, “Big Boys on The Block: The Intersections of Militarism and Patriarchy,” in Manjeet Bhatia and Nirmalya Samantha, eds., *Gender Concerns in South Asia: Some Perspectives* (New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2008), 63

²⁴“Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat,” *Report by International Initiative for Justice* (IIJ), December 2003, . 29.

Another incident was the rape and killing of Luingamla, a 14-year-old girl on 24 January 1986. On that fateful day, she was all alone at her home as her family members were away to attend church. She belongs to a poor family, and since she did not have proper footwear, she could not attend church on that day. Taking advantage of her being alone, Captain Mandir Singh and 2nd Lt. Sanjeev Duby from the Madras Regiment attempted to rape her. When neighbors who heard her scream for help went to her house, they heard two gun shots. They found her dead in a pool of blood and her mouth was muffled with clothes. Seeing the neighbors, the two army men ran away from the house and they straight away called other members of the army from the camp and announced a curfew in the village blaming that insurgents had killed Luingamla. The villagers were then herded to the village ground as a tactic to find the perpetrators. The Indian army then tortured the villagers, in spite of the fact that the neighbors had caught the perpetrators red handed. This was one way of intimidating the witnesses not to open their mouth. The Indian army also knew very well that they can escape from the crimes they commit by manipulating the facts. The General Court Martial in 1998 convicted the accused Captain Singh to life imprisonment for the murder of Luingamla and the co-accused Dubey was acquitted by the court martial.²⁵ But it was also heard that Singh was ultimately let off.²⁶

The state's attempts to impose its 'authority' extended from punishments meted out to individuals and families into forms of collective punishment. The imposition of indefinite twenty-four-hour curfew for days, which was the first of its kind in India, made it impossible for ordinary citizens to buy daily supplies, prevented

<https://www.onlinevolunteers.org/gujarat/reports/iijg/2003/fullreport.pdf>, accessed on June 17, 2013

²⁵Sudeep Chakravarti, *Highway 39: Journey Through a Fractured Land* (New Delhi: Fourth Estate, 2012), 77

²⁶Ibid, 77

those needing medical attention from reaching a hospital, and inflicted enormous hardship on poor, daily wage laborers. Frequent and prolonged crackdowns are other forms of collective punishment.

The Tangkhul Shano Long organized protest rallies against the attempted rape and murder of Luingamla in Ukhrul, and later in Imphal, which were attended by thousands, including organizations and communities from the valley. One of the outcomes of the rallies was the resolution to observe March 11 as the Unity Day of the people from the Hills and the valley of Manipur to fight against violence against women by armed forces.

According to S1, a friend and neighbor of Luingamla, “I decided to capture the spirit of Luingamla and through weaving. I came up with the design and weaved the *kashan as a memory of her*. It was then taken to the Tangkhul Shano Long, the apex women’s organisation of Tangkhul Naga Tribe and I explained the story behind the *Kashan* and its design.”²⁷ With the approval of the Tangkhul Shano Long, the *Luingamla Kashan*²⁸ came into being. Samples of *Luingamla Kashan* were then sent to different corners of Tangkhul region with the story and meanings behind the creation of a new *kashan* so that the women folk could copy and weave the *kashan*, and also wear the *kashan* as a symbol of protest and solidarity against the Indian armed forces for their crimes and violence against women. The *Kashan* is worn by the Tangkhul Naga women on the death anniversary of Luingamla every year in memory of her fight against the Indian army. The spirit of Luingamla lives on.

²⁷ Interview with S1 (62 years) on 5 October, 2013

²⁸ *Kashan* is a TangKhul Naga Tribe word for ‘a traditional wrapped around cloth used by women to cover the lower parts of their body’. There are different kinds of *kashan* with different meanings, and to be worn on different occasions. See Appendix A-2

All these atrocities and violence committed against the civilians have contributed to the emergence of representational stories in Naga fiction literature. Temsula Ao, a Naga writer, in her book of short stories called *These Hills Called Home* narrates brutalities of sexual violence being committed by the Indian forces against Naga women. This is a small extract from the story: “Lebeni was now frantic. Calling out her daughter’s name loudly, she began to search for her in the directions where she was last seen being dragged away by the leader. When she came upon the scene at last, what she saw turned her stomach: the young captain was raping Apenyo while a few other soldiers were watching the act and seem to be waiting for their turn. The mother, crazed by what she was witnessing, rushed forward with an animal-like growl as if to haul the man off her daughter’s body but a soldier grabbed her and pinned her down on the ground. He too began to unzip his trousers and when Lebeni realized what would follow next, she spat on the soldier’s face and tried to twist herself free of his grasp. But this only further aroused him; he bashed her head on the hard ground several times knocking her unconscious and raped her limp body, using the woman’s new lungi afterwards, which he had flung aside, to wipe himself. The small band of soldiers then took their turn, even though by the time the fourth one mounted, the woman was already dead.”²⁹

²⁹TemsulaAo, *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2006), 28

The Naked Protest

Violence and torture against civilians, especially on women, is brought about by the misuses of power and privileges enjoyed by security forces in Manipur. Majority of the physical and sexual violence incidents go unreported in India due to the fear of stigma. Only a few cases are filed and even in these cases women do not get justice. On the night of July 10, 2004, Thangjam Manorama was arrested without warrant by Assam Rifles men. She was arrested from her residence in Bamon Kampu on the ground that she was a member of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), a banned outfit. On the following morning, she was found dead at Ngariyan Yaripok Road with multiple gun shorts. The perversity of the crime is evident from the gun shots on her private parts. At about 5 a.m., her dead body was found with multiple gun shots on her private parts and thighs at Ngariyan Yaripok Road, about 2 km away from the nearest police station. According to Lt. Col. Kiran (name changed), “Manorama was an insurgent member of the People’s Liberation Army (hereafter, PLA) who was specialized in making improvised explosive devices (IEDs). While on the way, on the pretext of wanting to pee, she ran away. Under such circumstances of counter-insurgency operations she was shot on the leg. She was then admitted to a hospital. And it was in the hospital that members of Manorama’s own insurgent group killed her and mutilated her body. It was entirely staged by insurgents and which was then supported by the Meitei people through a naked protest etc. The Assam Rifles who carried out the operation are not fools to commit such crime as they had informed the headquarters about the operation. It can never happen. The operation was carried out by Junior Commission Officers as the information they received was on spot. He further argued saying, We have our basic etiquette and training where we are taught and drilled to respect women and carry out our operation in a fair manner.

The only mistake about the operation was not taking a female police officer with us. The army conducted an Internal Inquiry into the matter and it was found that none of the army who conducted the operation had committed the crime.” However, an autopsy conducted on the corpse of Manorama by the Calcutta-based Central Forensic Science laboratory revealed semen marks on her petticoat, suggesting rape and murder. Justice Upendra Singh, who headed the Commission to look into the case, found the security men guilty. To him, “This is one of the most shocking custodial killings of a Manipuri village girl.”³⁰ The army conducted an ‘Internal Inquiry’ into the matter and it was found that none of the army who conducted the operation had committed the crime.”³¹ But the Assam Rifles challenged the validity of the Commission set up by the state government arguing that that they are empowered by the AFSPA. Like any other case, justice still awaits.

When civilians raise the issue of violence including rape by the Indian army, the motive is not to defame the Indian army. It only seeks justice no matter who the perpetrators are, and it is to get assurance that such crime does not happen again in the future. To sexually violate, rape and kill a woman just because she is a suspected insurgent/insurgent or enemy says a lot about the ethos of the Indian army’s role in conflict states like Manipur. The Verma Committee which was constituted after the brutal gang rape and death of Jyoti Singh (Nirbhaya or Brave Heart) in 2012 in Delhi made strong recommendations of violence against women by Indian army in conflict areas. The Verma Committee recommended sexual violence committed by military personal should be brought to the book of law under the ordinary criminal law. The committee also recommended a special security allocation for the security of the

³⁰ Krishnadas Rajagopal, “Manorama ‘mercilessly tortured’,” *The Hindu*, Nov. 14, 2014

³¹ Interview with Lt. Col. Arjun (name changed) who served in Manipur in 2013-2015. Dated July 31, 2018

women and witnesses involved in the case to prevent any kind of harassment from the men in uniform. The committee also suggested the appointment of special commissioners to ensure the safety of women. The commissioners should be either judicially or legislatively appointed. The selection of the commissioner should be also done on the criteria that the person should have prior experiences on women's issues in war zone. And the commissioners should be endowed with the power to audit and call for redress and criminal prosecution. The Verma Committee in the light of violence against women triggered by AFSPA also suggested a review.³²

The death of Manorama opened up the issue of violence against women, which could no longer be tolerated at the hands of the State armed forces. After the fifth day, there was a mass demonstration in the state capital Imphal. Twelve elderly women staged a naked protest against the state establishment to express their disapproval on the violence against women. Standing in front of the Assam Rifles Headquarters in Kangla Fort, Imphal, they shouted and displayed banners challenging the "Indian Army Rape Us", "Kill and Take Our Flesh".³³ Following the incident, curfew was imposed in the state but the protest continued to be staged. The act was so powerful and intense that all the people including the Indian army did not know how to respond. The women used their bodies as weapon to humiliate and shame the Indian armed forces. The protest also led to the demand for the withdrawal of AFSPA from Manipur.

This incident caught the attention of various national papers. Though national media covered the story, there was an apparent hesitation to show the complete picture of the protest. This apparent reluctant is evident from the media houses refusal

³² Justice Verma Committee on the "Report of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law", January 23, 2013, 150-151

³³ Apendix A1- Photo of Naked Protest.

to print the naked protest by women. Only Tehelka could fully commit to the full representation of the protest by covering the naked poster of women protesting. Urvashi Butalia in her article “*The Body as Weapon*” reflected on the dilemma of media houses. She writes that it is not likely that the media houses won’t the image of naked women protesting, rather they couldn’t overcome the thought of printing the naked image of women protesting.³⁴

According to Ananya Vajpeyi, “citizens in the Northeast have been reduced to what the Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has called bare life – human life stripped of its political description (bios), and rendered merely biological (zoe), so extreme are the operations of sovereign power upon it. Bare life is life placed under a ban in two ways – it is abandoned by law in the space of exception where it has no value and may be extinguished with impunity; it is also life that has been ‘banned’ in the spatialized as the camp. It is important to point out how the naked women protested with a banner ‘Indian Army Rape Us’ in Manipur on 15 July 2004 picks up on the reality of what it means to be reduced to bare life, and makes the naked body an icon of citizenship that has been stripped of the rights and is left exposed to the depredations of sovereign power. The naked body is the perfect icon of this political condition of rightlessness and exposure.”³⁵

Anjulika Samom recalls in her paper that what various activist have written about the protest which had taken the nation by storm. She recounts how Deepti Priya Mehrotra (2010) conceived the incident as a ritualistic transformation of Manipur women from victims to determined survivors through their act of protestation against

³⁴ Urvashi Butalia, “The Body as Weapon,” Sept 2, 2004.

<https://newint.org/columns/viewfrom/2004/09/01/body-as-weapon> , accessed on Nov 12, 2011.

³⁵ Ananya Vajpeyi, “Resenting the Indian State For a new political Practice in the Northeast,” in Sanjib Baruah, ed., *Beyond Counter-insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40

the state. Mehrotra calls this protest a revolution where women demonstrated a departure from patriarchal control with the protest signifying women in possession of their body and destiny. She likens this demonstration to the demonstrations shown by the Meira Paibi who are vigilantes of the Manipur society.³⁶

Following the mass agitation, the Union Home Minister visited Imphal and promised to set up a review committee to repeal AFSPA, 1958 and the incident that erupted as a backlash. Subsequently, the Indian Government appointed the Jeevan Reddy Committee to look into the matter. The committee came up with a report, but the report was never taken into account by the government of India. The Jeevan Reddy Committee recommended that AFSPA should be repealed. This act should be removed and substituted by extending the jurisdiction of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, which is applicable to the rest of India, to the Northeast. “The Reddy Committee describes the ULP as a cognate enactment relative to the AFSPA, and thus recommends that it be made to do the work of the AFSPA (GoI 2005b: 73-5). However, it should do this work not exclusively in the Northeast, but all over the country. This basically amounts to recommending that the exception be generalized, rather than that the rule be reinstated where it had been suspended which is Sanjib Baruah’s criticism as well.”³⁷

Another incident of violence against women which came under strong criticism was the gang rape of Jangthailiu Kamei (age 40 yrs), an U-morok (King Chilly) trader from Nungleiband village of Tamenglong, at Meijrao (Bishnupur) by four persons, of whom two are Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel and another a

³⁶ AnanyaVajpeyi, “Resenting the Indian State For a new political Practice in the Northeast,” in Sanjib Baruah, ed., *Beyond Counter-insurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40

³⁷ Ibid, 38

sub-inspector aspirant of Manipur Police. The incident happened on the night of March 21, 2012, when the victim along with her brother in-law was on his truck to sell U-morok in Imphal. They were suddenly stopped by four persons travelling in a car. They assaulted her brother in-law on the pretext that he had not registered the vehicle at the forest check post. At gun point they led Jangthailiu Kamei to a nearby field and gang raped her. They threatened to shoot her dead while she screamed for help. She pleaded them to have mercy on her saying she is a mother of four. She was found in an unconscious state the next morning. Apart from the physical and sexual violence, the perpetrators took away their cell phones, a sum of Rs 6,500 and about 40 kgs of their chilli. While filing for a complaint in the police station, she mentioned that she overheard one of the culprits calling “Sir Tiken” on the cell phone and this was used as a big clue in demanding a thorough probe into the case”. Taking note of the demand by various civil societies on the seriousness of the case, the police apprehended the perpetrators along with the confiscated goods and money. The irony is that in spite of what they have done to her and the trauma that she was going through, she was offered by the perpetrators to keep silent about the incident when she went to identify the culprits in the police station. But instead she demanded for capital punishment. Being poor tribal Naga women didn’t mean that she would sell her dignity after what they have done to her which was the most heinous crime ever. She was a mother of two girls and two boys. She was on her way to sell the king Chilli so that she could use the money to pay their school fees.³⁸

The tribals are still considered as savage, uncivilized, naïve, foolish and the like. As a result, there are two levels of sexual violence against women being perpetrated against Naga women in Manipur; firstly, by the security forces who hail

³⁸ Documentation by Naga Women’s Union, Manipur.

from the mainland India with more rigid form of cultural and religious norms for women in the society. Since they also come from a caste-based society and different racial background, there is an element of discrimination towards the tribals and the people living in the region. Secondly, even within the Manipuri society, there is also some form of discrimination by the dominant Meitei Hindu community towards the tribals. Hence, the state armed forces and police who serve these two categories extend their racial, religious, cultural and norms in their actions when dealing with people like the Nagas. Violence against women such as rape in such scenario both creates and punishes Otherness.

According to Paula Banerjee, “the impact of border laws (such as AFSPA, 1958) on people in North East India is often considered from a male perspective. There is little realization that these laws have various impacts on women. The women in the region are often portrayed by the coercive machinery of the state as not merely deviant, but their sexuality itself is considered threatening, rendering the impact of these laws on women even more violent.”³⁹

Not only are women raped by the security and police force, but they are also targeted for raising their voice of justice and security. A mass rally was organized by the Joint Action Committees constituted against the rape of Kamei and the murder of one Keisham Premila in collaboration with several civil society organizations. But the peaceful women protestors were made targets of Thoubal District Police, where the rally was blocked by the police leading to intense scuffle between the two sides. The

³⁹ Paula Banerjee, “Communities, Gender and the Border: A Legal Narrative on India’s North East,” eds., Kalpana Kannabiran and Ranbir Singh, *Challenging the Rule(s) of Law: Colonialism, Criminology and Human Rights in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), 258.

police in their efforts to drive back the protestors fired several rounds of tears gas shells and mock bombs causing serious injuries to six women.⁴⁰

Cases of physical violence are very common in conflict regions like Manipur. Mrs. S2 (Age 37), along with three of her male villagers, was picked up for no reason by state police commandos in plain clothes while they were collecting pig feed in Imphal. They were blindfolded and driven around and then were beaten and tortured by the police personnel who were all male. She was then approached the East Imphal police station, where she was again beaten by cane, kicked, and punched all over her body by three police women. It was in the police station that she was falsely branded as an NSCN (IM) cadre who was trying to plant bombs in the town, and abused with remarks like these days women are more dangerous than men. She was interrogated and when she replied saying that she is a mother of eight children with the youngest being 5 months old, they would torture her more saying she was lying. They beat her with cane stick until she lost consciousness. She was taken to court and released the next day. The doctor advised her to go for X-rays and other health checkup but she could not go due to financial problems. She narrates, “I was bed ridden for more than two weeks and during which I could not even hold my son nor was I able to properly breast feed him. I felt so sorry for him.”⁴¹ The incident gives us a clear picture of how violence against women not only affects the individual, but it affects also the entire family. Firstly, as a mother who could not take care of her child when she is needed the most, women require additional nutrition and health support if they have just given birth or are pregnant. Secondly, there was a loss of two hands in the family, as a woman in a tribal economy, particularly in rural areas, contributes equally or more

⁴⁰“Six Women Hurt in Police Crackdown, Bandh Called”. <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=10..290412.apr12> , accessed on April 20, 2012

⁴¹ Interview with S2, and group interview with S3,S4 and S5 on October 5, 2013, Ukhrul District.

than a man in the family's subsistence apart from the daily chores including fetching water and woods, taking care of the children, etc. In conflict zones women are stereotyped as just mothers, wives, survivors and victims, while men are portrayed as aggressors and soldiers. But the above incident clearly shows that women are also active perpetrators of violence.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is one of the most common forms of violence against women. Different kinds of Sexual harassment are faced by women day in and day out which include verbal abuse, groping, showing of private parts, staring with an intent to violate them, etc. In one village of Manipur, there is an army camp which is stationed about one kilometer away. The girls and the women folk of the village have been sexually harassed by the army for a very long time. The situation is such that, between the months of February to May, there is always a water crisis in and around the village. There is only one pond in the village which never dries up during these months of water crisis, and the pond lies in between the village and the army camp. So, during these months the army would also come to this village pond to wash and bath. The problem was that the army would harass the village girls and women, including little girls when they go to fetch water or wash their clothes. Since fetching water and doing the laundry is considered as the work of girls and women in Naga society, particularly in the villages, they are the ones who go to the pond every now and then. Not only were they sexually harassed, but they also felt insecure and lived in fear of sexual violence. This fear led to the village girls to always travel in groups which wasted most of their time as they always had to wait for one another. The villagers irrespective of their gender and age would normally bath around the pond particularly in the evening after their hard day chores. According to one girl, "They

look like *Mikhangayei*.⁴² According to S6, “Now we cannot even go and have a bath in the pond, as we never know when Indian army would turn up. The Indian army would always harass us by making vulgar comments, and at times they show us their private body parts when only a few of us come to fetch water. I really hate them.”⁴³ They not only sexually harass and instill fear on women and children, but also took away the freedom to carry out their daily chores.”

Counter Insurgency

According to Anuradha M. Chenoy (*et al.*) psychological operations play a big role in counter insurgency tactics. They are based on extreme militarist as well as gendered practices which are assigned to destroy the will of the people psychologically. Shaming and demeaning the honor of an individual or community is a common method because the concept of honor is an important aspect of psyche in traditional societies, including India. Various means that include encounter killings, disappearance, rape, torture, and destruction of livelihood are employed in the name of punishing the insurgents. All the parts of the region affected by insurgency is regarded by the army as a ‘special security zone’, and the human loss and impact seen as ‘collateral damage’.⁴⁴ It is difficult for the security forces to identify the insurgents from the civilians because of their invisible nature of presence. Thus, this leads to treating the civilians and the whole community like enemy.

In counter insurgency, members of both Indian military forces and non-state armed actors also become victims. But when Indian military personnel become victims, for instance in an ambush by the insurgents, the civilians living in that

⁴² *Mikhangayei* is a Tangkhul Naga word which means a human turned hairy beast.

⁴³ Individual and Group Interview with 8 girls aged between 12 and 21 of Ukhrul District on March 9, 2013.

⁴⁴ Anuradha M. Chenoy and Kamal Mitra Chenoy, *Maoist and Other Armed Conflicts* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010), 78.

specific locality would be terrorized by use of violence (raped, killed, beaten, etc). The use of such violence towards the civilians has been a form of revenge for their failures to destroy/kidnap the insurgents and for which the civilians/communities have to pay the price. “Available data on counter-insurgency related killings from 1992 till August 2018 in Manipur stands at 6144 2,294 civilians, 1031 security personnel, and 2,819 insurgents”⁴⁵

Extra Judicial / Fake Encounter

The Supreme Court in July 2016 announced that paramilitary forces should not have the liberty to use excessive force in the region where AFSPA is in operation. The apex court also ruled that the number of fake encounter cases amounting to 1,528 should be investigated and brought under the law. The extra judicial killing or fake encounters are comment recurring events in the state of Manipur. The fake encounter killing of Chungkham Sanjit (Aged 27), a retired insurgent (People’s Liberation Army), by the Manipur Police Commando (MPC) on 23th July, 2009 near the state assemble became a national news. In the collateral damage inflicted by the incident, a pregnant lady named Thokchom Rabina was killed.⁴⁶ The state police released a statement stating that Sanjit was held inside Maimu Pharmacy. When the police asked him to surrender, he started to fire at them. They further claimed that a loaded pistol was recovered from the youth. Such kinds of official versions of encounters are not easy to disprove. However, it is an unspoken agreement that the claims have no true. But to everyone’s surprise, a local photographer had shot the entire crime scene as a counter evidence. The photographer without any protection feared for his life and did

⁴⁵ “Insurgency Related Killings 1992-2018” http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/insurgency_related_killings.htm accessed on August 15, 2018

⁴⁶ Teresa Rehman, “Murder in Plain Sight,” *Tehelka*, August 8, 2009. <http://old.tehelka.com/murder-in-plain-sight/>, accessed on March 21, 2013

not dare to publish the pictures in Manipur. He sent the photos to be published in the Tehelka Magazine. The case was taken over by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2010. T. Herojit Singh confessed to the killing after six years in January 2016. T. Herojit Singh a gallantry recipient and head constable confessed to the killing of ChonkhamSanjit, “Yes I shoot him....I shot Sanjit Meitei...No, he was not armed...I felt no remorse, no sympathy after I killed Sanjit. I felt nothing. It was an order and I had to simply carry out.”⁴⁷ and the order was cleared by the police chief and the Chief Minister.⁴⁸

On the fateful day, Rabina Devi (age 22) who was seven months pregnant was on her way to a hospital with her two-and-a half-year old son for monthly pregnancy check-up. Suddenly a police commando started firing indiscriminately at bystanders from his service weapon to make it look like an encounter. In the incident, she was shot on the right side of her temple leading to death on the spot.⁴⁹

Manipur Police Commandos, earlier known as Quick Striking Force (QSF), was formed in 1979. The Manipur Police Commandos do not fall under the AFSPA but this military outfit becoming notorious across the state for their crimes that are well planned and hard to prove. With all of their extra-judicial activities, they still go scot free as they are backed by the State. The Manipur Police Commandos forms part of the Indian Reserve Battalion, and is raised by the state, with financial assistance coming in from the Centre. Its main purpose is to fight the insurgents and not to oversee day-to-day law and order problems. In the Imphal valley the commandos are

⁴⁷ NK Bhoopesh. “Killer Confession.” *Tehelka*, Jan 9, 2016. <http://old.tehelka.com/killer-confession/> accessed on April 10, 2016

⁴⁸Urmi Bhattacharjee, “Asked to ‘Finish off Unarmed Man, Cops Confesses in 6 year old shooting,” *NDTV*, Jan 27, 2016. <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/in-a-6-year-old-shooting-in-manipur-a-cops-confesses-127067>, accessed on Jan. 28, 2016.

⁴⁹Harsh Dobhal, ed., *Manipur in the Shadow of AFSPA* (New Delhi: Human Rights Law Network, 2009), 116

the most feared, even more than the Indian military. The present strength of the commandos is about 1,600 personnel. Many human rights activists are of the opinion that the killings are, in most cases, done to achieve some gallantry awards that are awarded to military personnel on Republic Day. A military person with gallantry award in the state would bring hike in salary, promotion, and a good prospect of rising in ranks. This is evident in the case of N Nungshibabu Singh, who was a havildar policeman in 2003. After his involvement in a fake encounter, he along with three of his accomplice was awarded the President's police Medal for gallantry on Republic Day following the recommendation of Guwahati High Court.⁵⁰

According to Mrs. S14, "My husband was taken away by the army in the morning and in the evening at around 4 p.m. we found my husband's body in the police station. His body was found with bullet wounds on his chest and bruises all over his body. After hearing about his death, my father-in-law collapsed immediately and died due to heart attack. We filed a case in the police station and fought for it in the court. The court ordered the government to pay 2 lakh rupees as compensation to us."⁵¹

In May, 2012, three surrendered militants of the United Nation Liberations Force (UNLF) were gunned down by the Assam Rifles posted in Nongdam. According to the UNLF, "such traitors are often used by security forces. They are encouraged by the security forces to commit murder and extortion against any people by using the names of other insurgent groups in the state. Their longevity is determined by either their obedience or usefulness and they are simply disposed off

⁵⁰Esha Roy, "Manipur 1528 'fake encounters' later, a court rules," *The Indian Express*, July 11, 2016.

⁵¹ Interview with S14 (Age 50), Ukhrul District, Manipur on March 24, 2014.

when they have outlived their purpose.’’⁵² It was believed that three of them were handed to the Assam Rifles by the respective families for facilitating surrender. As is evident from this case, there is no proper mechanism and policy for the surrendered, or militants who want to surrender.

Bablu Loitongbam, the Human Rights Alert Director, who is fighting the cases of Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families Association (EEVFAM), asserts that there is a general agreement that in a counter-insurgency operation, security forces can kill. The suspected insurgent is stripped off of his right to a fair trial which is the core mechanism of AFSPA. He also argues that the manner of intel collection which is mainly depended on local informants is erroneous. As a result, the armies could easily allege anyone for petty reasons like land dispute or those whom they have a personal problem with as an insurgent. These people could be killed without any questions being asked.⁵³

Operation Bluebird: Oinam Incident of Mass Punishment

Ever since the enactment of the AFSPA, 1958, the Indian army has launching counter insurgency operations in the regions inhabited by Nagas. They have beaten, tortured, raped, and murdered the Nagas. Many villages have been burned down in the name of counter insurgency. Nandita Haksar and Sebastian Hongray in their book *The Judgement That Never Came* have categorized Operation Blue Bird as the most inhuman military operation against the Nagas in Manipur. The paramilitary force Assam Rifles launched a counter insurgency operation on July 1987 in Oinam village in Senapati District of Manipur. The military operation was conducted in the context

⁵²“No Other Fate for Renegades, “Imphal Free Press, May 11, 2012.

<https://www.ifp.co.in/page/items/6078/6078-no-other-fate-for-renegades/> accessed on May 13, 2012.

⁵³Esha Roy, “Manipur 1528 ‘fake encounters’ later, a court rules,” *The Indian Express*, July 11, 2016.

that the village housed NSCN militants. The Indian army claimed that NSCN group killed nine soldiers and took away many arms and ammunitions of the army. In retaliation to this, the Assam Rifles launched Operation Bluebird by exacting revenge on the innocent civilians in and around Oinam and its neighboring 30 villages. They raided the civilians as they believed they had given the insurgents protection. When the operation was in progress, the Assam Rifles closed off the roads to journalist, human rights groups and politicians. Some who attempted to enter were detained, even tortured, and made to sign documents denying the treatment meted out to them.

Operation Bluebird resulted in the death of 27 civilians; two were buried alive while the youngest were five babies who had died because they were denied medical attention. The villagers were kept in the open or locked up within the confines of the church buildings for over 12 hours at a stretch, even denying them to answer nature calls. Torture techniques included beating on the body and on the soles of the feet, rolling wooden logs over victims' legs, upside down suspension for hours, electric shocks, mock executions with blindfolded. Three women were raped, many were sexually abused and beaten, and children have not been spared either. According to Mrs. S14, "Two of the women who were in the final stage of pregnancy had to give birth in front of everyone. There was a pool of blood at the birth place. And no one was allowed to help them or their babies. Sadly, one of the babies (a girl) died on the spot. What can be more inhuman than that?"⁵⁴ About 300 civilians were severely beaten up in the operation. Oinam village had about 700 household, and many were said to have run away after the incident to live in other parts of the district.

Livestock which include chicken and pigs were all eaten by the army stationed in the villages for counter-insurgency. Villagers were prohibited to go out even to

⁵⁴ Interview with S15 (Age 60) of Oinam, Senapati District on Jan. 23, 2014

their fields, and since the incident happened during the cultivation season villagers had to abandon cultivation, which resulted in shortage of food in the following year. Even two years after the incident the villagers were forced to register in the army gate if they were to go out of the village or to their fields. Approximately 123 houses and granaries were said to have been either destroyed or burned down. The burning down of traditional houses meant the burning down of aged old Naga art and heritage inscribed on these houses.

In December 1987, the village folks were forced to work as porters, construction laborers and dhobis for the security forces. Outsiders were denied entry into the areas, including the journalist, human rights workers, and even the Chief Minister of the State. To ensure further manipulation of the facts, the officer in command of Assam Rifle, Major General Kukrety called for a press conference in which he forced a gathering of people who welcomed him warmly for the press event.⁵⁵ Late RishangKeishing, a Tangkhul Naga who was then the Chief Minister of Manipur when the incident happened, had in his letter to then Union Home Minister Buta Singh mentioning that the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police were barred from doing their duties and they were humiliated wrongfully.⁵⁶

The Assam Rifles also engaged in a systematic suppression of facts. This was done by lying to and misleading the inquiring authorities, and by intimidating the witnesses. When asked to explain the deaths of the 14 villagers, the Assam Rifles claimed that they were killed while ‘trying to escape’ or in ‘armed encounters’. The Guwahati High Court had collected all the evidences as the case was brought up by

⁵⁵ Clare Talwalker, “Security Forces Abuse Human Rights: AI Report on Oinam,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vo. 26, No. 3, (Jan. 19, 1991), pp. 89-90, 89

⁵⁶ Rahul Karmakar, “Manipur’s Horror: when Operation Bluebird struck terror,” *The Hindustan Times*, Nov 5, 2014

the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights in October 1987, yet the judgment is still awaited and so thus the scars still remain. In July 2018, the Nagas observed the 31st anniversary of *Onae Reh Dah* (The Great Battle of Oinam), organized by the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights at Vakhho village in Senapati District, to show solidarity with the people who have suffered the inhumane violation of human rights by the Indian army with their 'Operation Bluebird'. It was also observed with the hope that justice will be delivered someday and that the people have not forgotten the operation. The terrors and horrors of the operation were depicted in the form of an act performance during the gathering.⁵⁷

When the State responds to a non-state armed group for its activities with repression, it draws attention to the group and allows it to present itself as the victim and further strengthen group solidarity, often at the expense of moderates within the community. This repression increases public awareness and sometimes attracts finances and support. The non-state armed groups also frequently try to militarize the political struggle by blaming the state for the atrocities committed towards the civilians. When attacks and ambushes occur in public places, bystanders are bound to be caught in the crossfire.

Mao Incident: Physical Assaults, Tear Gas and Looting

Thuingleng Muivah, The General Secretary of the NSCN (IM), was to visit his village Somdal, in Ukhrul District, Manipur on 3rd May, after a period of 40 years. Muivah was also to address two public rallies, one at Ukhrul and another at Senapati in May. But the Manipur Government, which is totally against the NSCN (IM) and the Naga issues such as the integration of all Nagas under one administration or their

⁵⁷ Appendix A-5: photo of the performance.

fight for self-determination, decided to block Muivah's entry. The government was also pressured by the mass protest of the Meitei community which forms a majority of Manipur's population and occupies 40 out of 60 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Nagas of Manipur, on the other hand, were in full support to have their leader visit them. The Nagas in support of Muivah who were having a peaceful rally in Mao gate⁵⁸, in Senapati District were indiscriminately attacked by the State police killing two students and injuring many including women. The incident was believed by many Nagas as an attack by the majority Hindu Meitei who controls basically every institution be it the state government or the police force. The women folks were on a peaceful procession after a prayer meeting. They were holding hands singing a hymnal song 'We Shall Overcome' when suddenly they were attacked by the State police and Indian armed forces using tear gas, gun shots, and were lathi charged along with various other physical assaults. The reason for the procession was to ask the state government to release individuals who were assaulted and taken into custody by the police. About twenty women were seriously injured in the incident. According to Mrs. S75, "The men in uniform shoot at us as if we were dogs and cows. Not only that, they even use gun butts to hit the women folk. When I fell down after I was hit, I ask God to save me, and not let me die in front of my enemy. I did thank God when I was able to get up and run for my life."⁵⁹

According to another woman S16, on the day of the incident, her family members did not want her to go for the peace procession as she had a four-month-old son to be taken care of. But since she was the General Secretary of the women folk in the village, she felt that it was her duty and responsibility to be part of the procession, and hence left her baby in the care of her mother. Suddenly she saw a tear gas flying

⁵⁸ A border Town of Manipur neighboring with Nagaland, largely inhabited by Mao Naga Tribe
⁵⁹ Interview with Mrs. S16 (Age 31) of Song song village, Senapati District on March 13, 2013.

in and it exploded near her, and as a result she was badly injured in the thigh even leaving her pants torn. According to her, “the situation was so intense that I thought I was going to die. And it worsened when I heard that two persons were already killed. When I looked up from the ground after I got back to my senses, I saw many women whose faces were covered with whitish paints and I thought it was the result of the tear gas. So, I touched my face to check if I had the whitish paints on my face as well. But it was after the incident that I got to know the women folks had applied Colgate (toothpaste) on their faces as it was rumored that it helps against the tear gas. I still have no idea if it had helped them.”⁶⁰

Miss S17 runs a small shop in Mao Gate. She was once married and had a family, but her husband left her. And soon she lost her only child. She is the only child and after her mother passed away her father remarried, but then her father also passed away. All this time she had been living alone as her step mother did care for her. On the day that incident happened she was at home and when one person was shot dead right in front of her. Due to fear she ran away from her home leaving behind all her valuables. They took away Rs. 70,000 in cash from her home. The money belonged to a Self Help Group to which she belongs and she had to struggle for four months to pay back the money. They also stole her gold jewelry worth Rs. 1,50,000 which she had invested. Apart from that the men in uniform looted many things from her home and her shop, which includes blankets, kitchen utensils and gas cylinders. According to her since the State police and army were stationed in the village for days during the conflict, they must be using her things. For her, it was one of the saddest days in her life. She was stripped of her lifelong savings and now sadly she has to start afresh to save each cent again for her future. All this made it a little harder on her

⁶⁰ Interview with Mrs. S17 (Age 30) General Secretary of Song song village Women’s Organisation, Senapati District on march 13, 2013.

as she did not have any relatives to help her. According to her, people looked down on her or judged her as her husband had left her. Being a shopkeeper, her profession always required her to interact with people. She also had to be nice to the customers and whole sellers. Her predicament only shows how society still found it difficult to accept single independent women who lived their own lives.⁶¹

According to Mrs. S18, “Just because we are ethnically different from the Meiteis the State Government used the police forces against us, as majority of the police belongs to the Meiteis. Not only did the police shoot, hit us with their gun butts, shot tear gas, lathi charged, but they used slang word against us which are very derogative and discriminatory word such as ‘*Hewthu*’, ‘*Shakthu*’, ‘*Haothu*’⁶² etc.”⁶³ There is still a strong discrimination faced by the tribals at the hands of the *Meiteis* in Manipur, not just because they constitute the chunk of the population, but also because their system is influence heavily by the Hindu caste based system ever since the time of Meitei Pamheiba who imposed the Hindu religion on the Meitei people. The State Government uses the police forces to get something done on ethnic lines, and the Mao gate incident was one of such many incidents against the Nagas by the dominant Meitei community. Ved Marwah, former governor of Manipur affirms, “No police in the country has a worse record than the Manipur police. There is an allegation that they shot one of their own officers in fake encounters. The force is completely divided along ethnic lines and functions like the armed militia of the ruling party. That place is like the Wild East.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Interview with Miss S17 (Age 30) of Mao Gate on March 13, 2013.

⁶² In Meitei dialect *Hewthumean* Dog Vagina, *Haothumean* NagaTribe Vagina

⁶³ Interview with Mrs. S18 (Age 55) of Mao gate, Senapati District on March 14, 2013.

⁶⁴ Shoma Chaudhury, “Life in a Shadow Land,” *Tehelka*, August 15, 2009. <http://old.tehelka.com/life-in-a-shadow-land/4/>, accessed on: March 11, 2011

The Meiteis are ethnically and linguistically very close to the hill tribes, but after they converted to Hinduism, they are heavily influenced by the caste system because of which the hill tribals were treated as outcastes. This, in turn, left deep scars among the hill people.⁶⁵ Since then the tribals have been subjected to discrimination, and many tribals think it still continues. The point to be noted here is that the tribals including the Nagas were never part of the Meitei princely state, nor were they under their control; instead they have always had connections and contacts as neighbors.

Collective Punishment

The Indian state attempted to impose authority extend not only to individuals and families, but they also imposed it on the whole community as a whole to punish them as a whole. The practice of indefinite curfews, verification and detention in check-posts became common which made life hard for those needing medical attention from reaching hospitals, prevent ordinary citizens to buy their daily supplies, and inflict enormous hardship on poor, daily wage laborers. Frequent and prolonged crackdowns act as other forms of collective punishment. In April 2014, Konkan villagers in Ukhrul District were tortured by the Assam Rifles during a combing operation. According to S19 and S20, the village authorities, “We were herded into the village courtyard and then were stripped and beaten in full public view where women and children were also present. The army personnel were all drunk.”⁶⁶ This is how the army try to demoralize the fabric of the society by trying to instill fear and sexually humiliating men, elders and leaders of the society in front of the public. .

⁶⁵PradipPhamjoubam, “The Homeland and the State: The Meiteis and the Nagas in Manipur”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 45, Issue No. 26-27, (June 26, 2010), 12

⁶⁶ Interview with S19 (Age 60) and S20 (Age 55) of Konkan Villager Authorities, Ukhrul District on August 5, 2013

Sexual violence against women is about the demonstration of power and dominance, which also holds true for sexual violence against men. For example, the construct of masculinity in armed conflict is that of the ability to exert power over others, particularly by means of power, force and dominance. Men are considered to represent the virility, strength and power of the family and the members of the community, who are able to protect not just themselves but others. But when sexual violence against men in a community takes place, their masculine attributes are being stripped away from them thereby emasculating them.⁶⁷

There has been violent repression in varying degrees of intensity committed by both the Indian security forces and insurgents in the conflict-ridden state of Manipur. Unlike other crimes, violence against women cuts across socio-economic lines. Crimes against women are seldom reported, and when reported, they are less than likely to result in conviction. The crimes are dismissed and blamed on the victims, after which they are not taken seriously in most of the cases.

When one talks about the issues of sexual violence, they have mostly been about women as victims. It is also important to ascertain and consider if men have been subjected to any kind of sexual violence. This issue has been neglected because of the stigma associated to loss of masculinity. In most of the cases that have been reported by investigating committees, the sexual violations undergone by men are dealt as torture rather than sexual violence. The sexual assault of a man by another man is considered as an act to feminize the assaulted. However, such kind of violation against the male sex in the conflict zone has not received proper attention. The current

⁶⁷ SandeshSivakumaran, "Sexual Violence against men in Armed Conflict," *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2007), pp. 253-276, 270

discourse on sexual violation in conflict zone is restricted on the prism to see the womenfolk as victims and the men as victimizers..⁶⁸

Here, I would like to argue that men/male also constitute an important group of sexual victims in a situation of armed conflict in Manipur. What remains unknown is the degree or extent of the sexual violence against men. There is little or no work done on sexual violence against men in Manipur. Sexual torture including rape, castration, genital beating, and electroshock are systematically used against men and boys in Manipur. K. P Singh is one such survivor of sexual violence in Manipur. On July 22, 2002, the Assam Rifles arrested him for no reason while he was travelling on a bus. According to his testimony to a commission of inquiry, *“I was blindfolded and taken inside their camp. I was forced to eat a cant of tobacco. My clothes were removed. My hands and legs tied up. And they started beating me up, including administering electric shocks. I was hung upside down and beaten black and blue. The torture continued intermittently for the next three days. On July 30, 2000 a rod was inserted up my anus and vigorously stirred thereby causing severe pain and bleeding. In doing so the wooden rod broke inside my anus. Chilli powder was also applied to my eyes, anus and genitals as a result of which I could not urinate”*.⁶⁹

In a documentary *Naga Story- The Other Side Of Silence* (2003) by Gopal Menon, a Tangkhul Naga man narrates his story of how he was raped by an Indian army, *“I saw a man in uniform. He called me from behind and let me sit beside him. He took me towards my neighbor’s hut. He slapped me on both sides of my face as*

⁶⁸Natalia Linos, “Rethinking gender-based violence during war: Is violence against civilian men a problem worth addressing?,” *Social Science and Medicine*, 68,(2009), 1548

⁶⁹“Documenting violations: A commission of Inquiry looks into Abuses of Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Manipur,” *Combat Law*, Vol. 2, (April-May, 2003), Issue 1
www.indiatogether.org/combatlaw/vol2/issue1/violations.htm, accessed on: July 10, 2013

*soon as we reached the hut. I was dragged down to a nearby streamlet and I was told to bend and crawl. He kept his rifle on my back and told me to remove my pants. He took out his penis and inserted in my anus like a dog.”*⁷⁰

Sandesh Sivakumaran in his essay “*Sexual Violence Against Men in Armed Conflict*” writes that sexual violence against men is a recurring and widespread incident.⁷¹ Likewise, Natalia Linos in her essay, “*Re-thinking Gender Based Violence During War: Is Violence Against Civilian Men a Problem Worth Addressing*” writes that the rate of sexual violence against men is lesser than women. Sexual violence against men was carried out to hamper the reproductive system of men to control population.⁷²

Inciting Violence

It is an open secret in Manipur that the Indian security forces go along with various other militant groups or the renegades in counter insurgency operations. This enables the security forces an easy access to local or unknown terrain or hideouts of other non-state groups. And going along with the insiders gives the security the upper hand to access information. Penny Green and Tony Ward in their essay “*State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption*” writes that states also uses sponsor terrorism against certain sections of the state’s population or the populations of another states, whose regimes they either oppose or support.⁷³ In the case of Manipur, the Indian states have been using other communities against the Nagas or working with other

⁷⁰ Gopal Menon, “*The Naga Story: The Other Side of Silence, 2003*”. Documentary

⁷¹ Sandesh Sivakumaran, “Sexual Violence against men in Armed Conflict,” *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2007), 259

⁷² Carlson, 2006 quoted in Natalia Linos, “Rethinking gender-based violence during war: Is violence against civilian men a problem worth addressing?” *Social Science and Medecine*, 68, (2009), 1549

⁷³ Penny Green and Tony Ward, *State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 107

deflected groups of Naga insurgents. For example, the Indian army over the years has conspired to incite inter-tribal ethnic conflict. The main purpose is to use loyal tribes against the anti-national tribes. In Manipur the Indian Army allegedly favors and protect the Kuki tribe to attack the Naga supporters of the NSCN (IM) in Chandel District of Manipur.⁷⁴ It has become a common site for people living in villages to witness the Indian armed forces and state sponsored insurgents patrolling together in the hilly regions to counter against other armed groups. And this has brought about so much fear among the Naga communities in Manipur, as there is always an ethnic tension between them. This strategy of the Indian state is not of recent origin as it had been practiced by the colonial British government to suppress the Naga Raj in the 1930s.

Militarizing the Civilians: Special Police Officers

Special Police Officers (hereafter, SPOs) have been used liberally by the police in all areas of armed conflicts in India. They are recruited to win them away from the insurgency and also use them for extra-judicial killings. It is a common knowledge that in Kashmir, the troubled spots in northeast and the Maoist affected areas, the police forces have encouraged young militants to surrender and promised them rehabilitation with normal jobs. But these men instead were given placement as Territorial Army personnel and SPOs. Such policies are applied with the view to make them infiltrate and attack militants. The SPOs spread terror because they enjoy official patronage. Once they join the police it is virtually impossible for them to leave. They are poorly paid, acting as shield between the militants and the security forces. But the Indian state/government denies the use of the SPOs for such

⁷⁴Kamal Mitra Chenoy, "Nationalist Ideology, Militarization and Human Rights in Northeast," *Manipur Research Forum*, Vol. 3, Issue. 1. [http://www.manipurresearchforum.org/previous article002.htm](http://www.manipurresearchforum.org/previous%20article002.htm), accessed on Sept. 21, 2017

operations, and even deny the existence of SPOs operating in many regions of conflict.

In March 2008, in Heirok village of Thoubal District, members belonging to an insurgent group opened fire in their attempt to manpower a person during a festival, resulting in the death of three youths and two girls, while another woman lost her eyesight. The villagers, angered by the incident, decided not to allow any revolutionary groups to enter the village. This was followed by the decision to expel families whose sons or daughters are part of revolutionary groups. Taking advantage of the Heirok incident, at the request of the villagers, the government of Manipur recruited 300 SPOs so that they could protect themselves from militants.⁷⁵

Instead of taking control of the situation, the government made the situation even deadlier by militarizing the civilians to take up arms rather than providing protection to the villagers. This policy was one of the first of its kind in the insurgency infested Manipur where civilians are recruited in large numbers to take up arms as part of government's strategy to contain insurgency. Appeals were made by various Meitei insurgent groups to the villagers on their decisions, but it was turned down by the people of Heirok village. Subsequently, insurgent groups such as Kanglei Yawol KannaLup (hereafter, KYKL) and United National Liberation Force (hereafter, UNLF) imposed a restriction on the villagers from moving outside their village. Furthermore, the villagers living in other parts of the state were forced to return to the village. "As a sign of warning to other villagers for not adhering to their imposition, a youth from the village who runs a pharmacy in Imphal was shot on the leg". It was

⁷⁵Bibhu PrasadRoutray, "North-East: Minimal Gains of Counter –Insurgency Operations," ed., Chandran, D. Suba and P.R. Chari, *Armed Conflict in South Asia 2009: Continuing Violence, Failing Peace Processes* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 143.

only in July 2011 that the ban and inhumane acts of the insurgents on the villagers was lifted in view of the degenerating condition of the people.⁷⁶

Restriction on Media

The various conflicts in the Northeast is relatively unknown to the rest of the world due to media censorship by the government. Malem Ningthouja writes that the state government had imposed restrictions regarding publications of certain materials which are against the state. On second August 2007, the state issued a regulation that prohibits the publication of any information dispatched by any banned armed outfit. And on fourteenth August 2007, another regulation was passed which prohibited the publication of materials which are considered as harmful to the integrity of the nation. Any media houses breaching the orders were to face actions, including search, confiscation and destruction of material. The state government and its forces have been responsible for the murder of Konsam Rishikanta on November 17, 2008, who works as a junior sub-editor at Imphal Free Press. According to the CBI, Herojit Singh the one responsible for the fake encounter as discussed earlier, was again found to be the killer.⁷⁷

The media has an important role to play in a society, especially in conflict situation by reporting real and unbiased narratives of the daily events. They should function without any restriction, and with freedom of speech and expression, so that they can enlighten the people, and also let the voices of the people be heard in various ways. The media can also play an important role in campaigning and raising

⁷⁶ Interview with Mr. S76 of Heirok Village, Thoubal District on November 3, 2012.

⁷⁷ Killing of Rishikanta: CBI charge-sheets two including CdoHerojit, May 13, 2013. e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=1..140513.may13, accessed on May 15, 2013

awareness on the issues of violence against women and bring about a change in attitudes, policies and practices.

Narratives of the ‘Other Side’: The Indian Army and Goodwill Operations in Manipur

The Indian army through ‘Operation Samaritan’ has been involved in various development and welfare programs in the Northeast since 1995. A similar operation named ‘Operation Sadbhavana’ was also launched in 1998 in Jammu and Kashmir. It has been setting up medical camps, building infrastructure, imparting education, fighting for women’s empowerment, and providing medical assistance etc..But at the same time many civilians in Manipur critique that these are part of the counter insurgency policy and are just a mere show to cover up their human rights abuses. No doubt these operations are carried out with the view to dispel the negatives image of the army by so that so that trust and confidence is built between the civilians and the army. S 21 (Lt. Col. Of Indian Army) strongly argues that the Indian army is serious about all these projects. According to him, the Indian army filled in the gap through ‘Operation Samaritan’ where the state government and other institutions have failed to reach. The Indian army gets separate funds for doing all these projects. And once the projects are promised to the people, they deliver it on time unlike other government institutions and all these projects are well documented. Sometimes such projects are carried out in collaboration with the state government and non-government organizations as well. He further asserts by saying that sometimes, local politicians make use of the Indian army from the funds collected from them for several development and welfare projects for their respective constituencies since they cannot fulfill the assurances that they had made to the people during elections. Moreover, when it comes to first aid medical assistance or other medical emergency,

the only place for the civilians living in remote and rural villages is the army camp where doctors and medicines are made available to the civilians. Thus, the army fills in the gap where the actual state institutions who are responsible for the welfare of the civilians fail to reach due to various reasons. In this respect the army has made a very positive impact on the lives of the civilians in rural and remote places. According to Lt. Col. “during my service in Manipur, I saved about 40 to 50 snake bite victims in medical Centre where I was posted. And we do not ask them their religion or their ethnic community. We were there to only serve the people in every possible way.”⁷⁸

A recent incident in Shingkap village and adjoining villages in Ukhrul District highlights a co-narrative about the role of the Indian army in development and welfare projects. On July 27, 2018, villagers and insurgents were alarmed by the sudden arrival of a large number of the 17th Assam Rifles who were camping in and around the villages. About 200 army men were camping in the villages of Marou, Shingta, and Lungpha, while about 120 army were in the villages of Itham, Bahoram, Chongdan, and about 100 army personnel at Hongpei village.⁷⁹ The Tangkhul Naga Civil Organization informed the Deputy Commissioner of Ukhrul about the incident, but the Commissioner himself could not get any information as to why such a large number of Assam Rifles were stationed in the area creating a lot fear among the civilians. The next day, when Tangkhul Naga leaders along with the media went to Shingkap village, they found that a medical camp had taken place under the presence of Commandant of Shangshak, Col. Rishi Dubly. In the medical camp, 96 people were treated, 20 solar lamps were given to the villagers, and the army made a promise to build a marketing shed for the villagers. The army also gave a sum of 13 lakh

⁷⁸ Interview with S 21 (Lt. Col.) who had served in Manipur in 2013-2015, dated July 31, 2018

⁷⁹ Memorandum submitted to N. Biren Singh, Chief Minister of Manipur by Tangkhul Naga Civil Society Organizations on July 30, 2018

rupees to the village for building a Community Hall.⁸⁰ The Tangkhul leaders argued that without pre-informing the villagers about such camp, the army had caused a lot of fear among the villagers by the presence of a large number of army personnel. But the Commandant argued that from the 'security point of view' the army decided to come to the village under such circumstances.⁸¹

It is also true that the Indian army publicize their good deeds in media which includes local newspapers, television, etc., apart from which they would erect huge hoardings with pictures of their developmental and welfare projects. The Assam Rifles, which constitute one of the major Indian armed forces to deal with the insurgents, sees themselves as "Friends of the Hill People". The nineteenth century sociologist and traveler Verrier Elwin coined the force its motto: Friends of the Hill People.⁸² The motto can be seen in big gates all over the Assam Rifles Camps in Manipur and elsewhere. But banners and graffiti throughout the region have described the Assam Rifles as 'Killers of the Hill People or Enemies of the Hill People'. As part of their defense against charges made by Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and the people of Oinam and other villages, the Assam Rifles submitted details of their welfare activities in the Guwahati High Court by claiming that for the past 157 years they had traditionally been the only source of comfort, welfare and support for tribal people in the remotest areas of this region where no government agency had reached.⁸³

⁸⁰Interview with a member of the Village Authority of Shingkap Village on August 6, 2018

⁸¹Aja Daily Newspaper, Dated July 28, 2018

⁸²Sudeep Chakravarti, *Highway 39: Journey Through a Fractured Land* (New Delhi: Fourth Estate, 2012),

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⁸³In Nandita Haksar and Sabastian M Hongray, *The Judgment That Never Came: Army Rule in North East India*. (New Delhi: Chicken Neck, 2011), 206

There are also stories of Indian army men who have inspired many and led by examples in armed conflict areas. Colonel (Retd) Prakash⁸⁴ served in various capacities as an Indian army officer for 16 years in the Northeastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam. He was posted in *Mon* District, inhabited by the *Konyak Naga* tribe in Nagaland, from 1984-1987, which was at the peak of insurgency. He was a commanding officer taking control of about 15 villages. It was in a very volatile situation when he arrived. But instead of using force and other violent counter-insurgency methods he decided to follow a policy called “psychological operations” by which he means taking control of the minds of the local people by trying to understand their problems and to bring about a change where people can integrate with the mainstream. As a first step, he suspended all forms of counter-insurgency operations for three months in the region. He interacted with the locals in every possible way to get their confidence and trust. He learned the *Konyak* dialect, participated in every village festival, met village chiefs, leaders, and pastors, and even preached about the Bible and humanity in the *Konyak* dialect.

In the beginning, his officers were very skeptical about his methods of dealing with the people living in armed conflict. But at the end, his effort and policy became a great success. According to Colonel Prakash, in three years of his tenure, not even a single gun fire was shot in the region under his jurisdiction. Even the insurgents had a respect for his policy and as a result about 50 insurgents laid down their arms and surrendered. The Indian army, along with the villagers, built houses for the surrendered. Colonel Prakash also elucidated on how during an incident when their camp was completely burned down, the villagers came and built the entire army camp. In the process of all these, he developed a close relationship not only with the

⁸⁴ Interview with S 22 (Col. Retd, Indian army) on July 26, 2018

villagers, but also the insurgents. During his tenure, women from the villages were trained in handicrafts and handloom, and some were sent for nursing courses by the Indian army. He asserted that villagers of about 3,000 people prayed for him for the change that he brought in the region and that it had changed his life as well. He still has many close friends in Nagaland.

In the winter of 1994, Captain DPK Pillay (aged 26) from Kerala and his men were ambushed by members of the NSCN (IM) in LongdiPabram in Tamenglong District of Manipur. In the shootout, the young Captain was seriously injured; he was shot in the chest, right arm, and stomach, and his right foot sustained injuries from a grenade attack. In the crossfire, two young Zelianrong children, a boy and girl, were also injured and knowing that the children would not survive if they were to be taken by road to the nearest hospital, which was about 6 hours journey, Captain Pillay insisted that the children be airlifted first to the hospital. Captain Pillay who thought he would not survive did not only survive but also saved the life of two young children with his selfless deed.⁸⁵ Moreover, under his instruction, the civilians of the village were saved from further counter-insurgency attacks and harassments. The villagers found out about his whereabouts, and in 2010, he was invited by the villagers in a special re-union. Pillay, now a Colonel, got the chance to meet the two kids whom he had saved; the boy now works in a bank and the girl is now a mother of three. He also got the chance to embrace the insurgent (now surrendered) that shot him, which marked the sign of forgiveness and redemption. He was also inducted as an important member of the village community and considered as a younger brother by the village headman, which according to the Naga tradition is the highest level of recognition given to any outsider. According to Col. Chonker, who served in the

⁸⁵ "Unique Saga of a Soldier who Manipur Loves," *CNN-News*, Published on June 10, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAklzHJPPEs>, accessed on August 4, 2018

LongdiPabram village area it is was a dream to be known as a savior rather than a killer.⁸⁶ Col. Pillay's third visit to the village was in 2017 after his retirement where the Assam Rifles organized a special program in his name. Solar lamps were distributed to the villagers. Under his initiative and request, the Central Government of India also agreed to construct a 100 km highway to connect the village with other parts of the state. The villagers now called him Pillay *Pamei* (Pamei is a clan surname).⁸⁷ The villagers also offered him 100 acres of land which he turned down. He said he need no land, only some place in your hearts.⁸⁸ The story shows that even in areas of armed conflict where there is so much of violence and hatred, there are also stories of Indian army men who have led by example, spreading the message of love and humanity.

There are welfare and developmental works carried out by the Indian army as an institution and also some heroic and inspiring acts of individuals as discussed above. It should be applauded and set as examples for others. But this cannot cover up the human rights abuses that have been carried out for decades in the name of counter-insurgency. The Indian army as a responsible institution must be accountable for the action of its members against any form of human right abuses. Only then the civilians will begin to trust and understand the complexity of counter-insurgency. If such individuals/group are not punished, it would only imply that they are given the license to commit any forms of violence.

⁸⁶"A Soldier's Emotional Journey," Published on March 13, 2010.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVIOvgC7gBQ>, accessed on August 4, 2018

⁸⁷ "Injured Soldier Saved Lives in Manipur Village. 22 Years On, His Gift-Light," *NDTV*, Published on March 29, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wu76zsn2Y, accessed on August 4, 2018

⁸⁸"Brave Heart Kerala Soldier DPK Pillay Wins Over Manipur: How "Pillay Pamai" Inspires India," *India Today*, Published on April 11, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RYBml13IYY, accessed on August 5, 2018.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a human rights issue. The chapter clearly shows that the State and its armed forces turn a blind eye to violence against women and at the same time institutionalize it, and the violence itself is gendered. In the name of national security and counter-insurgency, the state security forces have inflicted so much violence, particularly on women, and their bodies considered as a battle ground. There is no one easy solution to bring about an end to the suffering of the civilians at the hands of the Indian armed forces. It must be noted however that one positive solution would be the removal/amendment of the AFSPA, which gives impunity to the army and their actions.

Chapter 4

Insurgents/Non-state Actors' Violence against Women

The Naga armed movements are called 'national liberation movements' by the Nagas whereas the Indian government labels them as 'insurgencies' and their cadres as 'insurgents', 'militants' or 'terrorists'. The combatants in armed conflicts and their close supporters call themselves 'freedom fighters' or 'national liberators' because they glorify their struggles and justify their militarist methods. In mainstream discourse the same insurgents are referred to as the 'underground', since they live in the shadows of the state structure and their organizations are considered illegal. Manipur, similar to Kashmir, is one of the most militarized states of India. Government reports suggest that militant organizations are virtually running as parallel government in many districts of Manipur. This is a case of a failed state within the Indian union.

Today, there is not a single sphere of social, economic, or political activities left where non-state armed groups have not come in between by exerting their policies with force. It has become a trend for non-state actors to issue several decrees in a bid to control the normal lives of the civilians and demonstrate their authority. The chapter attempts to look at the armed non-state violent movement in Manipur which affects the normal life of the civilians through bomb blasts, killings, extortion, physical violence, and strikes, causing considerable civic and administrative disruption. Acts of subversion by militants prompt the State to use greater repressive methods. Dissent is barely tolerated by most of these insurgent groups and they are known to annihilate those who oppose them or have betrayed them. This chapter also looks into how, in a situation of armed conflict, women frequently become the iconic

representation of culture and/or ethnic identity. This chapter will also explore the various types of violence being perpetrated against Naga women by Naga insurgents as well as by insurgents of other ethnic based communities. It will also analyze various other forms of violence being used by the insurgents in armed conflict.

The Naga movement for right to self-determination became very violent due to a number of reasons, and was further aggravated by the harsh measures undertaken by the Indian government. The Naga non-state armed groups embraced violence as a strategy seized out of weakness or absence of other forms of protest or struggle, and not out of belief in its efficacy.

Kinds of Violence Committed by Insurgents/Non-state Actors

A number of insurgent groups in Manipur resort to deadly violence, which threatens the lives and security of civilians as well as the Indian armed forces and their families. Several of the NSA groups in Manipur tolerate lumpen behavior and are thus termed degenerated insurgencies. This is on account of illegal forms of extortion of money and theft of arms, authoritarian control over the cadres and communities, disregard for the lives of others and disregard of any state institution. All these insurgencies/conflicts are asymmetrical as they are smaller groups who are up against the force of a powerful state. The methods employed by the insurgents are unconventional by nature and they use terror tactics as well as political and psychological warfare. Terrorist methods are a form of communications, retaliation, and retribution against the state, even though most often it is innocent people who are at the receiving end.

Physical Violence

Physical violence against women, like any other forms of violence, is a common phenomenon in the armed conflict state of Manipur. Physical violence includes acts such as kicking, slapping, punching, beating with stick and objects etc. In March 2013, a group of women were chatting in the verandah of Mrs S33 one evening, when suddenly an insurgent hailing from the village came looking for someone who he believed had passed by them. When they replied that they have not seen or were unaware of anyone passing by, he took firewood lying nearby and began trashing everyone including a 75-year-old grandmother who lives in the house. When the daughter-in-law questioned the behavior of the perpetrator, she was kicked in the stomach. In the commotion her husband who happened to be in the kitchen came out running, but he was threatened with dire consequences if he helped her wife or interferes in the matter. The husband could not do anything but look helplessly at her wife who was in deep pain and was out of breath. She questions during an interview, “What is the use of being a man and a husband who cannot even help his wife and mother? I was begging him to help me as I was unable to even breathe, but he just kept staring at me as he was scared of the perpetrator. I can never forget that incident nor forgive the perpetrator for what he did to me and to all of us.”¹ Mr. S 35 husband recounts the incidents, “I could not help her since I did not have any weapons with me and he held a gun in his hand. I was warned not to get anywhere near her. When I tried to move, he threatened to kill me.”² A 75 years old S37 mother of S35 narrates the incident as such, “He also beat me with sticks. If he can even beat me, an old woman like his own grandmother, he is not human. I cannot forgive such kind of people, only God can.” The fear for the insurgents has been deeply rooted that people

¹ Interview with S 33 (Age 37) of Ukhrul District on April 21, 2015.

² Interview with S 35 (Age 40) of Ukhrul District on April 21, 2015

don't dare to even question or interfere when these people misbehave. This is what one of victim had to say about Naga Insurgents, S 37 the grandmother continues "in the past, people joined the movement with a vision, a reason to fight for our motherland, our freedom, but these days the people who join are mostly good for nothing and who has criminal records. Insurgents with these kinds of backgrounds coupled with improper training where they are not taught to respect human rights, but instead taught only to use firearms and use force are bound to create an environment of violence wherever they go."

Use of Bombs

Bombing and bomb attacks are a new phenomenon taking place in Naga inhabited areas. Prior to 2010 there was hardly any news of bomb explosion in civilian areas or attack on civilians in the Naga districts or in other Hill Districts of Manipur inhabited by the tribals. But of late this has become routine in Naga inhabited areas. Earlier, bomb blasts and attacks were carried out only by the Meitei Insurgent groups in the Imphal valley. The bomb blast in the Naga inhabited areas are the works of the Naga insurgent groups such as the Manipur Naga People's Front and other smaller groups that defected from the parent NSCN-IM and now work with the valley-based Meitei insurgent groups. Until then there was never any incident of bomb culture targeting civilians or any other government or non-government institutions. This culture has caught the attention of the civilians and is now considered as one of the most feared phenomena among the Nagas in Manipur.

In July 17, 2012, three members of a family, including two women were seriously injured when a bomb exploded at a residential house of Boonson in Ukhrul at about 8:30 p.m. The victims included Mrs. S38 (Age 56), her son and daughter in-

law. Due to the seriousness of the injury they were unable to be treated in the district hospital and hence taken to Imphal for further treatment along with security escort. The bomb was thrown at the house and it exploded on the tin roof, thus resulting to more lethal impact. The police could not confirm the kind of bomb used. The son who works as Assam Rifles personnel was on holiday and his right-hand fingers were seriously injured that he could no longer be a rifle man and hence he was assigned to an administrative task after the incident. As for the mother, the wounds are still clearly visible on her belly, hands and left leg. According to Ruth, they were very lucky to have survived. When the bomb exploded, they were getting ready to go to bed. According to the neighbors, in February that same year, some masked miscreants numbering about seven had attempted to attack the family, but the locals chased them away. Ruth was psychologically affected by the bomb blast. Following the bomb blast, for a few months, she always had this fear, that the same people who attacked them might target them again. She also began having sleeping disorder. She narrates that, “till date whenever I hear loud sound.....like a vehicle tyre puncture, children’s balls hitting the tin roof of their house when they play, etc..... I get numb, my chest ache and have breathing problem.....life has not been the same as it used to be”.³

In September 2014, a powerful Improvised Explosive Device⁴ (hereafter, IED) exploded in Neetu Glass and Hardware store owned by a Bihari in Viewland, Ukhrul District. The incident killed two innocent Tangkhul Naga women: Dinah (age 42), an Ex-president of the Tangkhul Shanao Long (Tangkhul Women’s League), and her cousin Lansophy (age 25). It also injured the owner and a salesman of the store. According to the proprietor Mr. S37 (Age 50) , a few months before, “there was a

³ Interview with S36 (Age 56) of Ukhrul on October. 17, 2013.

⁴ Improvised Explosive Device is a homemade bomb, because they are improvised they can come in many forms, ranging from a small pipe bomb to a sophisticated device capable of causing massive damage and loss of life. The IED came into common usage during the Iraq war that began in 2003.

demand for rupees 30 lakh from the store by the Manipur Naga People's Front. Our store is not even worth rupees 30 lakh. How are we supposed to pay such amount to them?"⁵ According to S38, police Officer in Charge, it was a very powerful explosion and the goods of the shop which include tin, steel and iron nails made the impact even more damaging. Had there been more passerby or customers in the shop, the result would have been devastating. After the attack, the owner again received a demand letter threatening that they will attack again until he pays the amount.⁶ As a result, the store owner decided to leave the town, but was persuaded not to leave by the civil society and the locals who decided that they will fight together and not give in to the demands and violent attacks of such gangsters. Ukhrul district, like any other Naga inhabited district, is controlled by the NSCN (IM) insurgent group. As a result, the newly formed and minor Naga insurgent groups wanted to come in and have a share in the collection of taxes and showcase their presence. It is basically a fight for power to control the town and the people. But the point is that the civilians are not in a position to pay taxes to each and every insurgent group. As a result, in the tussle for power and control between various insurgent groups, the civilians have to bear the brunt of such attacks and threats.

Due to eight bomb blast incidents in a span of two months in Ukhrul town, concerned citizens of Tangkhul on Facebook group used the social media platform to organize a Candlelight Vigil on November 26, 2013 as a sign of protest against such cowardly acts. "Our land, and our home, set atop a beautiful serene mountain, is now becoming a home for anti-socialist/anti-social elements. Making their presence felt aloud with bombs/explosions, instilling insecurity and fear among us. Every rightful citizens and fellow friends, we are innocent and it is time to for us to raise our voices

⁵ Interview with S 37 (Age 50) of Ukhrul on November 9, 2015.

⁶ Interview with S 38, Officer in Charge of Ukhrul Police on November 9, 2014.

and reclaim our town's tranquility once again. We shall not be intimidated by such cowardly acts but rather join our hands and filter them out from our society", the Tangkhuls on the Facebook Group stated.⁷

On June 29, 2018 a powerful IED bomb exploded at the 27 Assam Rifles check post at Ramva village on the Imphal-Ukhrul road at about 7 am.⁸ In the incident, army personnel named Biju Surupawal (aged 30) from Assam died on the spot and two others were injured. The Assam Rifles were deployed at the check post to check vehicles carrying drugs, insurgents, arms and ammunitions etc. According to the Officer in Charge of Shangshak police station, "it was a very powerful IED explosion; and as a result, the deceased body was dismembered into pieces. Had the barrack not been strongly fortified, many women vendors in the women's market just apposite to the check-post would have died. The insurgents must have placed the bomb late at night or early in the morning as it was not occupied by the Assam Rifles. The deceased is survived by his wife and two children.⁹ We often fail to talk about the family members of the Indian army who hail from other parts of the country and lose their lives in combating insurgencies in Manipur.

According to a women vendor S39 (Age 50) at the check-post said, " W were lucky to have survived, it exploded just in front of us. We felt that such an attack at the army is an attack on us, because we sell our products right in front of the check-post, which is just ten metres away. Many people might say many things about the inconvenience caused by the army, but the army is also doing its job in apprehending drugs, illicit alcohols, and many other illegal substances. And for us, it is because of

⁷ Series of Ukhrul bomb blast, fear reigns, candlelight vigil today, November 25, 2013. <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=3..261113.nov13>

⁸ Appendix A-1: 6

⁹ Interview with S77, Officer in Charge of Shangshak police Station, Ukhrul on December 10, 2018

the check-post that we are able to sell out vegetables, food products and other products to the passengers, thereby making a living. We women vendors and women folk of the village strongly condemned the inhumane act and also had a sit in protest to bring the culprits to justice, showing solidarity to the deceased and the injured, and also to the Assam Rifles. As a mark of respect and solidarity to the family members of the deceased jawan, we the villagers presented a traditional shawl and coffin.”¹⁰

Collateral Damage: Civilians Caught in Crossfire

In October 2014, I witnessed an incident in my village in one of my field trips where a member of Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front was killed by members of NSCN (IM). The incident happened at about seven in the morning. The killers came acting as normal people who wanted to enquire something and when he came out of his house he was shot by pistol. He tried to run for his life but only managed about 100 yards as the killer ran after him and killed him. He recounts, “the incident shocked many of us who were his neighbors, not only by his killing, but due to the injuring of two other villagers, a grandmother and his grandson by the missed bullets that was fired at the targeted person. The grandmother who lives next door was holding the baby as they were sunbathing in front of their home that morning when the bullet hit the baby’s (a boy of 6 months) hand and then hit the stomach of the grandmother S40 (Age 70). The grandmother could not even utter a word for help and she fell on the ground. She thought she was going to die as she could not even breath, and seeing her grandson’s hand in blood made her even more worried. Moments later, her eldest grandson aged 12 years saw them lying on the ground. The boy, in the midst of fear ran to look for his parents who were not at home at that time. The boy did not inform anyone of us, the neighbor about what had happened. The baby

¹⁰ Interview with S39 (Age 50) of Ramva Village, Ukhrul District on December 10, 2018

suffered flesh wound as the bullet hit hand while the grandmother was severely injured and hospitalized for a month. It brought so much of financial hardship on the family as they were just ordinary farmers, but with the support and help from the relatives and well-wishers they managed to pay their medical bills. The incident has led to a total breakdown of grandmother's health. To be precise she is no longer normal like she used to be. But in spite of her health issues, she had to continue taking care of her four grandkids, doing daily chores like gardening, cooking, fetching water and feeding livestock. In a Naga community there is no age for retirement from work particularly for women including the old living in rural areas. The old not only plays a very important role in the functioning of a home, but also continue to contribute economically in a family. The treatment for the grandmother continued along with her daily domestic chores, such as gardening, and caring for her four grandchildren. This further deteriorated the health condition of the grandmother. Adding to the above problems, she and other family members had to bear routine domestic violence and abuse from her son who is an alcoholic. As a result, she was taken to Delhi after a year or so by her youngest son to live with him. But this didn't seem to solve the problem though, as she is found it hard to adjust to the metropolitan life in a metro where one is confined to four walls unlike living in the village where one lived in one's own home in spite of all the hardship. The last time I heard from her, she said she misses home in spite of all the hardship. She misses the fresh air, the smell of the grasses and the mud in the village. She has always longed to go back home, and is waiting to go back soon."¹¹

He further recounts, "In continuation of the incident, when a few of us neighbors got to know that the grandmother along with the baby had been injured, we

¹¹ Interview with S40 (Age 70) of Ukhrul District, on October 15, 2015

began chasing the perpetrator. At that time most of the villagers have not been aware of the shooting as the incident happened at the corner of the village. The perpetrator did get scared and ran for his life leaving his bike, and on the way threatened every villager with his pistol pointing not to come close, particularly women, girls and children who were fetching water. The children were so terrified and shaken that it left a deep scar on them. The perpetrator escaped from the catch of the villagers as the chairman on the village got a call from an unknown person claiming to be members of NSCN IM and warning the villagers not to touch the perpetrator. Due to the fear of the warning from armed groups the villagers stepped back. For them, killing seems to be the easiest and quickest solution to any problem. The incident terrorized the whole village, particularly women, children and the old.”

Sexual Harassment and Intimidation in Public

On December 18, 2013, a Meitei Manipuri actress Momoko was molested by a member of NSCN (IM) Lt. Col. Livingstone Anal at a musical fund-raising concert in Chandel Town. In her interview with New Delhi Television (hereafter, NDTV) she said, “He was touching me. I warned him. He pulled my hair and threw me to the ground and kicked me repeatedly. He also hit my left eye. There were security personnel also present there, Manipur police, Assam Rifles and army in the audience. But nobody came to help me. They were watching it as if it was a cinema. A Sub-Inspector of Manipur Police also said that there is cease-fire here, so we can’t do anything.”¹² But it clearly violates the Clause-1 of the ground rules of the Cease-Fire Agreement¹³ signed between the Government of India and the NSCM(IM). The clause states that the “NSCM (IM), which states “NSCN-IM would also act in a manner as

¹² “Actor in Manipur says she was molested, hit on stage,” *NDTV*, December 21, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXaECqMfW8g> accessed on December 22, 2012.

¹³ Appendix A-

not to cause harassment/damage or loss of property or injury to civilian population.”¹⁴
The insurgent also fire at co-performers who tried to help the actress, but they escape unhurt.¹⁵

This resulted to huge protest from the Meitei civil society organization including the film fraternity, demanding punishment to the perpetrator under the country’s law. However, one of the pertinent and problematic questions that can be raised is how, and under what law was the perpetrator going to be tried. It is an accepted fact that the Non-state armed actors/groups stand above the law, they do not come under the parlance with the state’s law, and that is precisely why the Indian forces are trying to destroy them. If the group to which perpetrator belonged was a responsible one then he must punish based on the rules and regulations of theirs.

The act was also condemned by the All Tribal Women’s Organizations, Chandel. In one of the interviews with the Naga Women’s Union, Manipur, they argued that the whole incident was exaggerated simply because the abuser was not from the Meitei community but from the anal community which is one of the Naga tribes in Manipur. But sadly, the aim of the demonstration, protest and bandh for justice became communal. They, the Meiteis attacked innocent Naga civilians in and around Imphal, whereby many were hospitalized and their goods and vehicles destroyed. They also raised slogans, such as drive out NSCN (IM) from the soil of Manipur, no ceasefire with NSCN (IM) should be applied in Manipur de facto or otherwise. Rather than addressing the issue of violence against women collectively, the whole issue was politicized and communalized. And more importantly there was

¹⁴Revised Ground Rules for Cease-fire between Government of India and NSCN-IM. *The Naga Republic*, Oct. 20, 2017. <http://www.thenagarepublic.com/files/revised-ground-rules-for-cess-fire-between-government-of-india-and-nscn-im/> accessed on Jan. 21, 2018. See appendix ceasefire agreement

¹⁵ “Manipuri film actress molested, state government orders action against formr NSCN-IM cadre,” *India Today*, December 22, 2012.

not a word of public apology for the violence or statement of punishment to the perpetrators from the NSCN (IM). There seems to be some kind of tolerance if an insurgent perpetrates crimes against an individual of other communities. At the end of the day any issue which confronts the whole society, particularly issues related to gender are easily manipulated by people for communal and vested interest. Further women's organizations which are said to be strong would always tend to sway towards their respective community interest. In other words, women folk and their organizations have always been under the control of their male counterpart in their decision making, goals for women's equality in all fronts, both private and public. Unless the women in Manipur realize this, the goal to empowerment is going to be beyond their reach.

The Tangkhul Naga community became the main target and focal victims of this communal chaos. The Tangkhuls are the major Naga tribe in Manipur who also have taken a major role in the struggle for Naga sovereignty and the General Secretary of NSCN (IM) Th. Muivah belongs to the community. According to Mr. S41 and S42, Tangkhul youth leaders in Imphal, "about 3,500 Tangkhul Naga people who came back from different parts of the country for Christmas vacation to their respective hometowns were stranded and they were put at various relief camps in Tangkhul colonies at Imphal due to the indefinite bandh imposed. It clearly became a communal and a political strategy by dramatizing the issue by not only targeting the whole Nagas community but also by singling out the Tangkhul community.¹⁶ Many people were hospitalized as they became victims of attacks. Adding to this, about 40 vehicles were torched along with the belongings.

¹⁶ Interview with S51 and S42 of Imphal, on January 10, 2014.

The above-mentioned events only bring to light the fact that many of the non-state armed groups or the so-called freedom fighters are very loosely organized. The non-state armed groups should be in a position to punish their own cadres for their wrong doings without which there will be more chaos and violence. But sadly, they have failed in this respect as many of the leaders themselves have become violators of human rights or crimes are committed at their orders, and hence it becomes complicated for the leaders of the group to punish their own cadres in the lower ranks.

Rape

For the first time in the history of Manipur, in January 6 and January 16, 2006, the people of Manipur were brought to shock when armed cadres belonging to United National Liberation Front (hereafter UNLF) and Kangleipak Community Party (hereafter KCP), which belong to the Meitei community, committed mass rape of 21 Hmar tribal girls, some of whom are minors, of Lunthulein and Parbung, two remote villages in Manipur's Charachandpur District. Thousands of Hmars out of fear from further rape and violence were forced to flee to relief camps in neighboring Mizoram state. But both the groups refute the charge point-blank, claiming it as an 'Indian intelligence ploy to defame' them.¹⁷ Organizations of the Hmar region say that the KCP and UNLF men were just venting out their anger and frustration of the Indian army's operation to flush out the militants from the hills of these tribal people.

To look into the issue, certain human rights groups, women's organizations and student bodies formed the Civil Society Fact Finding Team on Internally Displaced People. This comprised representatives of the Hmar Students' Union, Rongmei Lu Phuam, Human Rights Law Network, Human Rights Alert, and Naga

¹⁷Chhakchhuak Linda, "Women in the Line of Fire", July 22, 2006.
<http://www.indiatogether.org/manirape-human-rights> ,accessed on 03/04/2014

Peoples' Movement for Human Rights. The team conducted a six-day study in Mizoram – where the people who had fled the villages sought shelter – and in the two villages. But unfortunately, the team was divided not on facts, but along ethnic lines. The valley-based activists were inclined to doubt the women's statement, and the representatives of the hill peoples unquestioningly believed in the women.¹⁸

According to Malini Bhattacharya, who investigated the matter on behalf of the National Commission for Women, the people from the two villages told her that their villages were too remote to have functioning administrative set-ups, and so militants felt free to heap all sorts of atrocities on them. Since October-November 2005, the atrocities became worse and they could not even cultivate *Jhum* (rotational agriculture) fields. "They even had to feed the militants."¹⁹ On January 16, militants of the two groups armed with sophisticated weapons herded the villagers of Lungthulein, and had beaten and tortured about 400 villagers. The reason for the rape, torture and other forms of violence was believed to be a revenge/retribution for being denied adequate 'protection money' and seeking army protection. The truth is, that incident went largely unreported in the local media as its being controlled by the dominant Meitei community.

Nothing was done on such heinous crimes being committed, since the culprits were the non-state armed groups and secondly women's organizations such as the *MeiraPaibi* which are said to be strong remained silent as they are ashamed, insensitive and not concerned altogether as the heinous crime was committed by armed members of their community towards the minor tribal community. There was

¹⁸ Chhakchhuak Linda, "Women in the Line of Fire", July 22, 2006.

<http://www.indiatogether.org/manirape-human-rights>, accessed on 03/04/2014

¹⁹ Ibid

not a word from the *MeiraPaibis* or the Meitei civil societies or organizations. Had the crime been committed by the minor Hmar community on the Meitei's, the outcome would have been devastating for the Hmar tribe. This is the very reason as to why women's movement in Manipur has been stuck in a patriarchal set-up, where their rights and voices are compromised. This is also a reality of what is going on in Manipur. The non-state armed groups have become so powerful that nobody can raise their voice against them, and the fact is people fear for their own life as the state and its machineries including the police and military forces have failed to protect its citizens. The incident also further led to the division of the tribals and the non-tribals, and between the minority and the majority.

The incident highlighted the increased crimes, including sexual violence, being perpetrated by various non-state armed actors in Manipur with impunity. Prior to the incident, sexual violence perpetrated by NSA against women were either concealed or not talked about. The civil societies were more concerned about the crimes being committed by state forces. The 2006 incident, however, brought about a change in the narratives of sexual violence against women in Manipur, not only from the 'Outsider' that is the State army, but also from the 'Insider' that is the non-state armed groups from Manipur. According to an 80 year old woman S80, "the rape culture in Manipur is an import from the Indian armed forces. Before they came, we have never heard of women being raped in Manipur society."²⁰ Here, her statement is partly true. Sexual violence like rape was something which was not tolerated in the Manipuri society and it was something unheard of. But with the coming of the Indian armed forces and the powers given to them, they have been committing rampant sexual violence including rape on the women of Manipur with impunity. Such crimes

²⁰ Interview with S43 (Age 80) *Ima Keithel* (Women's market), Imphal January 10, 2009.

are learned and used as strategy by the NSA in order to control the civilians. At times it may not necessarily be a strategy to rape, but it may be solely due to individual action. But nevertheless, the men in the armed forces know that they stand above the rule of the law, and when given the power of impunity they are bound to commit such crime.

Since the state cannot provide the security of life and property to its own citizens, the people look to their own ethnic militias for protection. This is one of the major reasons as to why insurgency continues to survive by getting the loyalties in spite of their human rights violations in Manipur. In these situations when one ethnic group forms its own militia, a rival ethnic group might see it as a threat to its security. And since the state is seen as the major violator of citizen's rights rather than as protector, the people then form their own ethnic militia in pursuit of security through self-help²¹. It is in this context that one could find many non-state armed groups operating in Manipur, with different ideologies which may not necessarily be against the state.

In different parts of the hilly region, especially away from the major urban centers, when institutions of the state cannot guarantee the security of life and property, ethnic militias fill the vacuum. An ethnic militia, seen through the national security prism, may be part of a generalized threat to insurgency. But from the perspective of its ethnic constituency, it may be a provider of security.²²

In the past decade, violence, particularly violence against women by Naga non-state armed groups was unheard of. But now there are many cases of violence

²¹ SanjibBaruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16

²² Sanjib Baruah, "Northeast India: Beyond Counterinsurgency and Developmentalism", in Preeti Gill, ed, *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2010), p. 35.

against women, including sexual violence and rape. On 5th October 2012 between 3 pm to 5 pm, four high school girls, aged 14 to 16, who were on their way home from school were raped by members of Zeliangrong United Front (hereafter, ZUF) a Naga insurgent group of Zeliangrong tribe in Khoupum valley of Tamenglong District. The incident documented as follows, “On the 5th of October 2012 after the school was over the four school-going girls were on their way homes. Suddenly on hearing gunshots they were afraid to proceed and took shelter at a house of Mr. PakaPamei of Duithangjang village for some time. After the gunshots came to a standstill they started to proceed to their respective homes. Suddenly they found themselves accosted by two cadres of the ZUF namely Mr. LatzanthaiMalangmei (personal gunman) and Mr. Dibonpou Kamei (Lance Corporal) at Taisiamjang village near the gate of Pastor KhambiMalangmei. The four girls were abducted at gun point and taken to the IFCD office at Tousiamjiangvillge, Khoupum valley. The cadre checked out the office cum chowkidar’s residence of the IFCD. Since the house was locked, they broke opened by force with gunshots over the lock. The girls were taken to the common room of the IFCD building while Mr. Dibonpou kept guarding outside. Later, Mr. Dibonpou was also called inside the common room while Mr. Latzanthai forcibly pulled out and pushed Ms. A (all names are changed) and Ms B and kept them bolted inside the toilet. Then he forcibly dragged Ms. C to the bedroom and forced her to take off her clothes at gun point, while she resisted, he shot three rounds near her ankle and she screamed calling out for her mother for help. He muffled her mouth with his hand thus forced and overpowered her. While she was almost chocking, he released his hands and raped her. In turn, next to Ms. C, Ms. B and Ms. A were taken out and raped one after another while Mr. Latzanthai was committing this heinous crime against these three girls. The other culprit Mr. Dibonpou committed the same crime

against Ms. D. He forcibly stripped off all her clothes at gun point despite her protest and resistance. She called out for her mother and screamed for her rescue. To stop her from shouting he muffled her mouth and overpowered her and raped her. Mr. Dibonpou was always holding his pistol in his hand even at the time of committing rape. He was on full alert to ward off any intruders. Then after committing rape he forced her to spread a cloth in one corner of the common room and to sit on it. Then he forced her to lie down and he too lay down beside her, he puts his head close her head and said *“I will kill you and me, pointing his pistol at his temple, he pulled the trigger and killed himself.”* Fortunately, Ms. D raised her head and escaped. She picked up a piece of cloth that was available in the room and ran out. The other perpetrator also escapes from the scene.”²³

The other culprit Latzanthai was intercepted by the Red Shield Division at Pinjang and was handed over to the police. A Joint Action Committee (hereafter JAC) which was formed to look into the incident had come up with four points: to tender apology to the rape survivors, their families and people of the Khoupum valley and Zeliangrong community as a whole for the crime committed; to assure that the ZUF cadres shall not repeat such acts in future; to pay a sum of 5 lakhs to each victim as customary fine and compensation for rehabilitation; and that no underground/insurgent group should set up camps or offices within a Zeliangrong village. But, the ZUF had failed to respond to the demands of the people. Not only had the armed group failed but also the police officer in charge of Khoupum police station had even failed to file a relevant charge-sheet against the accused Latzanthai who was already in state prison even after three months of arrest. The JAC had

²³ The following narrative was documented by L. M Tabitha of the Naga Women’s Union, Manipur (NWUM) on January 8th, 2013. In my interview and interaction with members of the NWUM, I was told that they have been taken care of by the Catholic Missionaries Sisters in their Boarding school.

applied for the relief of the victims to the Social Welfare Department of Manipur, but they have never heard from them either. There was total failure on the part of the police to act against such heinous crime and also from the state government to intervene and give a helping hand.²⁴

Molestation with an Attempt to Rape

On December 24, 2013 a young girl S44 (Age 16) was molested with an attempt of rape. Thirteen students (six boys and seven girls) studying in different institutions in Imphal were on their way to their village for Christmas, when they were stopped by three self-proclaimed members of KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party, hereafter KCP) militants at about 6:20 p.m. in a deserted place, thereby separating the boys and girls. The three took away their mobile phones and robbed them their Rs 2,500. They were scared because they believed they were armed and were calling other members of their group on the phone. One of the perpetrators, who identified himself as a colonel of KCP, took the youngest girl from the group to a nearby place and attempted to rape her. According to her, “I was overpowered by the fellow. He got hold on me and threw me on the ground, and was on top of me. He then tore my shirt and my bra and started molesting and fondling my breast. He then tried to unzip my pants, but since I struggled hard, he could not. He got frustrated and punched me on my face. I continue to struggle but then I knew that that I won’t be able to move away from his clutches and knowing that he was becoming more violent I got scared, and that was when I told him that I will remove the pants myself. He

²⁴Ibid

believed me and let me got up. The moment I got up I just ran and shouted and screamed for help.”²⁵

On hearing her scream, other members of the group also started running. Their screams were heard by villagers of a nearby village Nongren, and they were rescued by the MeiraPaibis along with the villagers, and the incident was reported to the nearest police station of Lamlai. The three culprits were arrested on the same night by the police, and they were all said to be in the age group of 21-22 years. At the time of the interview, the family members had no idea about the status of the case. According to one of the families, they do not have the resources to go to court or the police station every now and then, and they were assured by some Naga human rights group that they would fight the case for them.

During police interrogation it was learned that one of the perpetrators was a former member of the KCP. Reacting to the incident, the KCP’s Information and Publicity Head S. Mangal clarified that none of the three individuals have any relation with the outfit, thereby issuing a statement that action will be taken against the three for misusing and maligning the image of the organization.²⁶ But the question that arises is, what kind of action are they going to take? Are they going to be shot to death? Since the non-state groups don’t want to be held responsible for the act committed by a member of theirs or others to misuse their group name, the easiest way is to eliminate them. This is how most of the non-State armed groups function. Such decision also enables them to divert the attention of the civil population. The civilians are no exception for wanting to see perpetrators of rape or other sexual violence to be given capital punishment. The people having gone through many forms

²⁵ Interview with S44 (Age 16) of Senapati District on April 27, 2014

²⁶ “KCP clarifies on NapetPalli incident”, Dec. 31, 2012. <http://www.thesangaexpress.com/22414-kcp-clarifies-on-napet-palli-incident/> accessed on 31/12/2012

of violence from both the state and non-state parties with impunity and are frustrated and have become very violent. Resorting to violence seems to have become the easiest way to react or respond to any form of injustice.

Recounting the incident, Mr. B (36), a man from the same village, the victim's neighbor, said, "We could also do the same to them as well. But only because we are Christians, we will not commit such a crime. But if it happens again, they will have to see what happens to their women." Such a comment implicates the perception of women's body as a battle field.

In June, 2018, the NSCN (IM) in taking a serious note on the issue of attempt to rape a married Naga woman by one of its cadres named Ng Wilson, the NSCN(IM) had terminated the cadre and sentenced him to 5 years imprisonment in their headquarter. After serving his imprisonment of 5 years, he will also not be allowed to set foot in the Senapati town for another five years. According to S45 of NSCN (IM) posted in the town, "it was a very unfortunate incident and we the NSCN (IM) are very ashamed of the incident. We will not tolerate any kinds of violence against women or any other kinds of unwanted behavior which is against the protocol of the Naga insurgent group and the struggle of the Nagas."²⁷

Economic Distress and Violence

Economic distress does not necessarily lead to violence, but combined with other factors such as the rise of unemployment, breakdown of social structure, failure of law and order due to conflict, many civilians young and old have been tempted or forced to take up arms or have become gangsters to take advantage of the conflict situations. For example, S78 joined the Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF)

²⁷ Interview with S45 in Senapati on December 19, 2018.

in 2012, a group which broke away from the NSCN (IM), as he was offered a monthly salary of Rs. 10,000. He was a divorcee with no children. The offer was a good one for someone who is unemployed or unemployable in the government sector as he couldn't finish his 10th standard. According to him, "he joined the group not because he believed in their ideology but mainly because he was promised a monthly salary. He also had a fascination for guns and the camouflage army uniform which he thought made men manly. He had also lost hope in life and the chores of a laborer in the village had bored him. So, he wanted to try for something new in life which will make him happy."²⁸

There is no denial that there are well educated people who join the insurgency for a good cause and to fight for what they believe in. But the majorities are those who are school dropouts, youths who have problems in the society in which they live in and half-witted ignorant minds who ran away from homes just to have their own way. And these are the militants who later become the violators of civilian rights. The correlation between low income and armed civil conflict is not necessarily because of objective conditions of poverty sustaining rebellion, but because poverty and unemployment provide favorable conditioned for militias to raise money and to recruit new members at a relatively low cost.²⁹

While crimes committed by the non-state armed actors enjoy impunity by their respective groups, any civilian who go against their ideology or misuse their group's name are severely punished, even to the extent of capital punishment. In a conflict state such as Manipur where there are rampant human rights violations particularly by the state forces and non-state forces, the civilians also have in a way been influenced

²⁸ Interview with S78(Age 34) of Ukhrul District on October 15, 2015.

²⁹ Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35

by them to commit crimes. And this has resulted to many civilians taking advantage of the existing conflict situation for their personal gain by even acting to be a member of well-known armed groups to carry out extortions and collect taxes. The conflict has led to a total breakdown of economy and since the livelihood of the people has become deplorable, ordinary people in order to feed their family fall into committing such activities by taking advantage of the whole crisis.

An example to such cases is that of James and John (names changed) who are believed to have been killed for acting as members of one powerful militant group by collecting taxes and even using fake stamps and papers. On interviewing the families of the deceased (they were bother-in-laws) they informed that they were told that they were not sure as to why one of them was killed, as the other person is still missing, but believed to have been killed as well. But according to sources of their relatives S46, “one of them have been killed for misusing the name of a militant outfit for their personal gain.”³⁰ It is unclear if the spouses of the two were aware of their activities. The fate of the left behind widows and their children is very disheartening. Such can be the fate of people who live in armed conflict zones. Among many other factors, high rate of unemployment and economic distress lead young men and even women towards crimes for personal gain.

The emotional suffering of losing loved ones and the other half breadwinner of a family to really knowing what has happened to them (their disappearances), is the hardest thing that a family can bear in their daily lives. According to Mrs S47 (Age 38), “it is so hard for me and my four children aged between 2 to 10 years to move on with our lives. Sometimes when the children asked me about the whereabouts of their father, it becomes the hardest thing. And since I don’t have an answer, I usually tell

³⁰ Interview with S46 (Age 45) of Chandel District on January 23, 2015.

them that their father had gone to some place far to work. But for how long will I be able to lie to them? Even if I wanted to tell them the truth, they would not understand either. Now what bother me the most is the thought of raising four kids on my own with the poor economic condition such as mine.”³¹ Whatever the reason, the family deserves to know what really happened, and for what reason he was killed. How will she even remarry if she doesn’t know if her husband is still alive or dead? Taking lives seems to be the easiest way for armed groups to deal with such people who commit petty crimes. Disappearance of men in conflict zones hampers women in many ways, as for example in Guatemala, widows of ‘disappeared’ were unable to obtain state benefits, and in Algeria, the Personal Status Code made it difficult for women to claim land and inheritances, and in other cases there is the legal implications of not being able to prove their partners death.³²

Murder for Ideological Differences

Although non-state armed groups engage in specific violent acts (such as killing, kidnapping, assault) they are driven by political or moralistic goals against what they often perceive as some chronic grievance with long history. They justify their crimes with a message that no one should disturb or betray their struggle. They often want their actions to be made public and attach their group’s identity to these crimes. They also engage in violent crimes for personal gain. They do not commit acts randomly or without purpose; instead they seek to maximize public attention for their acts and intimidate the intended audience.

³¹ Interview with S47 (Age 38 of Chandel District, on January 23, 2015.

³² *Lives Blown Apart: Crimes against Women in Times of Conflict* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2004), p. 26

In July 2011, a person named VareingamMahongnao and his wife were shot dead in front of their children in Lumpha Village in Ukhrul District for his anti-Naga activities by working for Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF). MNRF is small Naga insurgent group based in Manipur which defected from the NSCN (IM), which have ties with the valley-based Meitei insurgent groups. But the MNRF denied having any links with the deceased and questions the inhumane act which is based on personal enmity or vested interest.³³ The NSCN (IM) expressed regret for killing the wife of Vareingam saying that she was killed as she came too close to her husband's side. When they started shooting, however, they justify the killing of Variengam on the ground that he had been warned many times before for his illicit activities of extortion and collecting tax and anti-Naga activities.

Many women have become widows and children without a father due to the killings by the state and Non-state actors alike. One incident that hit the headlines was the killing of Jonathan Kashung (age 49), one of the presidential candidates of the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), the apex body of the Tangkhul tribe by the NSCN (IM). He was abducted on 13th September 2013 and his body was recovered on the 17th. He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters. The main charge for his killing was that he was sponsored 50 lakhs to contest the election by the Chief Minister of Manipur O Ibobi Singh who belongs to a Meitei community, and he was accused of being the chief advisor of one rival faction of NSCM (IM), and an intelligence agent of the Indian state. According to S49 the wife of the deceased, "I declare before God and man that my husband was falsely accused and killed for the vested interest of the NSCN (IM)."³⁴ The family took the body to their village for burial after. Due to mass

³³ "MNRF denies link with Vareingam", July 29, 2011. e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=10..290711.jul11 ,accessed: 29/07/11

³⁴ Interview with S49 (Age 40) of Ukhrul District on December 5, 2013.

scale protest and bandh called by the people from the region to which the deceased belong, the NSCN (IM) agreed to prove the allegations in 15 days after the incident and as a result the body was taken to his village for burial. But till date they have not been given any proof as to why he was killed. Why would the NSCN (IM) need 15 days to prove that he was guilty? What is shocking was that he was killed even before they could prove their allegations, and even more shocking is the fact that they could take away someone's life just because he did not conform to their ideology. The deceased wife was very much concerned about as to how she is going to bring up her children all by herself. She was a homemaker before her husband was killed. The father used to be the main breadwinner for the family. This is the reality of what is happening in the Naga Society where the armed men who in the name of fighting for the cause of the Naga people can easily take a human life without much care. To them killing seems to be the easiest way to eliminate any form of dissent or opposition to their ideology, rather than taking diverse views and ideas as constructive. The men with guns fail to understand the reality that they exist because we the civil society exist and support them, and that every individual must have a voice in the struggle for Naga movement.

Moral and Culture Policing

In most patriarchal societies, men's honor is seen as depending on women's 'purity', reaching dangerous degrees, wherein women who seek to escape this strict code face violence against them. In Manipur, the politics of purity has become a dangerous one for women. For instance, three women³⁵ from a village of Ukhrul District in Manipur were beaten by a member of NSCN (IM), on the ground of

³⁵ Group interview with the three Women S50 (Age 30) S51 (Age 25), S52 (Age 23), Ukhrul District on August 10, 2014

gambling and drinking local-brewed alcohol commonly known as *Ashaba*.³⁶ Culturally, drinking of such alcohol is not accepted in the society. More so, because these are of high alcohol content sold in black market. All the three are young married women with one to two children.

The interesting part of the incident was that one of the victims was the wife of the perpetrator, while one was his cousin and the other two are wives of his cousin brothers. The reason for beating them up was that they were against the moral norms, that they should protect the honor of the family by not indulging in such unaccepted habits. But they all denied drinking alcohol, but did play cards just for fun in the afternoons when they were free. Many questions can be raised from the incident. This is a case of a stereotypical patriarchal mindset. Like many other men in the village, the perpetrator himself drinks alcohol and has physically abused his wife many a times after getting drunk. What prompted him to commit such act was the fact that he believed he had the moral right to control them as he is a member of a Naga armed group. The incident brought about a lot of tension in the village, particularly to the family members of those women, especially the question of justice or revenge.

Today in Manipur it has become a trend for non-state actors to issue several 'decrees' in a bid to control the normal lives of the civilians and demonstrate their authority. They issue a variety of diktats, including the total ban on screening of Bollywood movies (anything which is from mainland India) in theatres, women wearing mainland Indian dresses such as salwar kameez or saris, and use of drugs, tobacco, etc. Such kinds of imposition are mainly seen in the valley dominated by the *Meitei* and *Meitei Pangan* (Muslim) community. In 2001, the Kanglei Yawol Kunna Lup (Kangjamba) (hereafter KYKL) issued a notice directing

³⁶ Local brewed drink of high alcohol content

Manipuri girls and women to not wear saree, salwar and trousers, and warned that those wearing the ‘banned dresses’ would be shot.³⁷

There have been instances in the early years of its imposition where women who wear such dresses are shot in the leg or in the stomach.³⁸ Women are told to wear only *phaneks*³⁹ or the traditional Manipuri attire. In educational institutions including schools and colleges in the Imphal valley, girls are imposed to wear *Meitei Phanek* only, whereas for the boys, there doesn’t seem to be any form of cultural regulations. The dress code in the educational institutions is the by-product of the stringent policy imposed by the NSA on the society. And the patriarchal society in turn manipulated the ideology of the cultural purity and its preservation, thereby imposing it on the weaker section of the society – the women. The imposition of *Phaneks* for example by the Meitei NSA and Meitei Civil Organizations for women in schools and colleges also violates the rights of other women who are from other minor tribal communities in the state, as well as citizens from other parts of the country, etc. The imposition of *Phanekson* women and girl children becomes not only an imposition on the Meitei women, but it also becomes a cultural imposition of the dominant culture on the minorities.

In the name of preserving the culture and tradition of the community, they want to impose certain rules by taking control of women’s body and rights. Hence, it is important to question why women alone should be considered by the society as a symbol of a community’s identity and its preservation thereby sacrificing their rights

³⁷ “Manipur women ‘resent dress code’”, August 30, 2011.

<http://www.thehindu.com/2001/08/31/stories/0231000q.htm> ,accessed on 21/19/2012

³⁸ BinalakshmiNepamiMentschel, “Armed Conflict, Small Arms Proliferation and Women’s Responses to Armed Violence in India’s Northeast” (University of Heidelberg: South Asian Institute, Dept. of Political Science, working paper No 33, December 2007), p. 18

³⁹ The wrap around traditional attire to cover the lower parts of women’s body

of expression and choice. Such kinds of imposition are also seen in the armed conflict state of Kashmir, where extremist militant groups seeking to enforce an Islamic code of behavior have launched other violent attacks on women. In 1993, members of the women's militant organization, Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the Nation) issued warnings to women in Srinagar not to come outside without wearing *burqas*, and for defying their orders paint were sprayed on women in which four students were hospitalized with eye injuries from the paint.⁴⁰ This example clearly shows the role of women as both victims as well as perpetrators in situations of armed conflict.

The media in Manipur has also not been spared from the diktat of the militant outfits. The state's media has also been forced to carry the press releases by the militants, with failure to do so often accompanied by threats and attacks. The media on occasions find itself in a conflicting situation when rival outfits forbid the publication of each other's releases. With the state's inability to provide security to its citizens, any refusal to fall in line with their orders has proven fatal for many civilians.

Abduction / Forced Recruitment of Children

A child soldier is described as : "...any child, boy or girl, under the age of 18 who is compulsorily, forcibly, voluntary recruited or otherwise used in hostilities by armed forces, paramilitaries, civil defense units or other armed groups."⁴¹ The United Nations (1997) in its 'Cape Town Principles' define it as : "a child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed forces or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The

⁴⁰ Anuradha Kumar, *Human Rights: Global Perspectives*(New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2002), p. 136

⁴¹ Clayton Hartin A and S. Priyadarsini, *The Global Victimization of Children: Problems and Solutions* (New York: Springer, 2012), p. 98

definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.”⁴²

There are child soldiers in every insurgent group in Manipur. While some children are in the insurgent groups to protect themselves or their families from violence and chaos around them or to seek revenge, others, particularly adolescents, are lured by false ideologies and promises. Child soldiers are used for sexual services, as combatants, as forced 'wives', messengers, porters or cooks. There has also been a recent trend to induct more girls into insurgency movement in order to avoid suspicion on the hardcore activities. The first reported case of mass abduction of children by militant groups happened in 2008, where between June and July, 24 children were reported missing leading to widespread protest in Manipur. One militant group, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (hereafter, PREPAK) admitted that they had recruited some of the missing children.⁴³

S53, a 14 yr. old and 8th standard school going kid, was allegedly kidnapped and recruited by members of Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front based in Manipur (hereafter, MNRF). He not only belongs to a poor family, but his family was in deep crisis; his mother had passed away about six months ago due to alcoholism, his only younger sister was paralyzed a year ago due to some unknown disease and has been hospitalized since then, and they are taken care of by the Mother Teresa Charity Sisters. His father stayed with his sister in the hospital to take care of her. Mr. S53 lived with his grandmother in the village. He would go to school and work as a daily laborer in the village whenever he gets free time. He would normally work in the

⁴² Clayton Hartein A and S. Priyadarsini, *The Global Victimization of Children: Problems and Solutions* (New York: Springer, 2012), p. 98

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *These Fellows Must Be Eliminated* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008), p. 10.

morning and on Saturdays to meet their daily needs and to take care of his school fees. He was a very obedient and a humble kid. But one day it was learned that he and another boy of his age from the village had disappeared. It was learned that he had been seen hanging out with a member of the MNRF group who hails from the village. The villagers were very sure that the armed member must have recruited these two boys. The grandmother came crying to the insurgent begging him to release the boy and bring him back.⁴⁴The grandmother was heartbroken. It was very disturbing to witness such an incident. But the NSA actor denied any role in their disappearance. It was learned a few month later that they had been recruited by the suspected member of MNRF and that they are stationed in Myanmar.

On March 10, 2013, a 14 year old school going Zeliangrong Naga girl named Alice Kamei along with another Meitei girl were forcibly recruited from their boarding school by Meitei insurgent groups Revolutionary People's Front/People's Liberation Army (hereafter RPF/PLA).⁴⁵ It brought about a strong response and protest on the whole issue of recruitment of children in armed groups. But the RPF/PLA claimed that the two minors have joined the outfit out of their own volition, and hence they are not to be blamed.⁴⁶ The issue came to a clear conclusion after the police arrested two women, a school helper and a cook who were involved in the kidnapping of the minor school girls along with an amount of Rs 30,000 which was alleged to have been received from RPF/PLA as payment for recruitment, and they revealed that the minor school girl Alice Kamei did not join the RPF/PLA. This example clearly shows the diverse roles of women in armed conflict regions where

⁴⁴ Incident witnessed in Ukhrul District on November 6, 2015.

⁴⁵ Peoples Liberation Army was established under the leadership of N. Biheswar Singh on September 25, 1978. People's Revolutionary Front is the political body formed by PLA in 1989. RPF runs a political-in exile in Bangladesh

⁴⁶ "Bodies warn against 'Kidnapping' of Alice", April 06, 2013. <http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=4..070413.apr13> accessed on 07/04/2013

some women become victims at the hand of women perpetrators. But in spite of the known fact that it was a forced/kidnapped recruit, the RPF/PLA remained adamant not to release the minor. This clearly shows that the RPF/PLA does not follow the international law of child soldier recruitment as against 18 years and below nor do they have respect for basic human rights or moral responsibility. It not only revealed their immaturity and highhandedness, but more importantly undermined their claim to liberate Manipur from the Indian state. The incident also brought about a huge tension between the Meitei and the Nagas in Manipur as Alice belong to Zeliangrong Naga tribe.

According to a report, there are at least 118 of India's 604 districts involved in armed anti-state activities.⁴⁷ India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on December 11, 1992. However, protection of the rights of children, particularly for preventing them from being made to fight in armed conflicts, is an area where the country has thus far failed, as children are often forced to take up arms in India after losing a close relative in the conflict.⁴⁸ The UN on the Rights of the Child, in its report dated February 26, 2004, urged the Indian government to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into the allegations of the use of child soldiers in India. However, the reference to child soldiers in the report was limited to the state of Jammu and Kashmir and Northeastern states.⁴⁹ As per a registered report, about 66 children in Manipur have been kidnapped and many have stayed back in the camps.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Venkatesh Ramakrishnan, "The Naxalite Challenge." *Frontline*, Volume 22, Issue 21, (Oct. 08-21, 2005).

⁴⁸ "India: Child soldier being used as expendable pawns in armed conflicts", Sept. 7, 2007. <http://alrc.asia/india-child-soldiers-being-used-as-expendable-pawns-in-armed-conflicts/> accessed on Sept. 20, 2014

⁴⁹ <http://www.humanrights.asia/news> accessed on Sept. 20 2014

⁵⁰ <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/manipur-militant-groups-hiring-child-soldiers/286935-3-225.html> accessed on Sept. 20, 2014

Recruitment of child soldiers in India is not confined to areas of armed conflict zones alone. Two of the aged old religious rivals: the Hindus and Muslims, both have their own self-defense groups operating under various banners such as the former's RSS, Bajrang Dal, and Shiv Sena, and the latter's Jamat-i-Islami-Hind and the Islamic Sevak Sangh. All these groups are said to have child soldier units. For example, the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is also reportedly recruiting girls to a group called the Durga Vahini.⁵¹ The Naxalites even have a child soldier wing called Bal Mandal (Child Forum).⁵²

Political role of Insurgents and their Nexus

Acting like the combination of a racketeer and policy lobby, insurgent groups can cut political deals and influence elections, and become enmeshed in a network of extortion and corruption that makes it difficult for politicians or bureaucrats to act independently of the rebels.⁵³ The Naga insurgent groups have been interfering in political representation and elections of the Nagas at the national level, State Legislative assembly and every local government and non-governmental organizations and institution. Of late Naga insurgent groups like NSCN (IM) have been strongly supporting the Naga People's Front (NPF), a political party which started in Nagaland and is now contesting elections in Naga inhabited areas in Manipur. Apart from openly supporting political parties and candidates, they have also involved in fielding proxy candidates, who should and who should not contest,

⁵¹ "India: Child soldiers being used as expendable pawns in armed conflict", A written statement submitted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre to the 6th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Sept. 2007. <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/alrc-news/human-rights-council/hrc6/AL-024-2007> accessed on Sept. 23, 2014

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Bethany Lacina, "Rethinking Delhi's Northeast India Policy", in Baruah, Sanjib. ed., *Beyond Counter-insurgency: Breaking the impasse in Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 333

booth ragging, threatening and intimidating voters, and use of violence. For example, in 2012 state assembly, suspected NSCN (IM) militants gunned down five persons at a polling station in Tampi, Chandel district of Manipur, which included a CRPF soldier, three home guards on duty and a women voter.⁵⁴

In the 2017 Manipur state legislative assembly, the NSCN (IM), campaigned in the Naga Hill districts to vote for Naga People's Front Party, during which it used force and intimidation. A women officer of the NSCN (IM) who has been in the group for more than two decades came back to her village during the elections and not only campaigned for the NPF party, but also intimidated villagers to vote for the said party. According to the villagers, the women insurgent had never been home for quite a long time. The women who now held high position in the NSCN (IM) as she has been in the group for about twenty-five years or so have visited her village only for a couple of times. Many of the younger population of the village do not even know that she belongs to the village. And when she came back, she acted like goons to the villagers. This has not been the first time that she had intimidated her fellow villagers, and mostly it is out of personnel vested interest or enmity. Members of the Naga armed groups think and act in very highhanded ways in their dealings with people. They must have been taught to be dominant and aggressive to command people. She also used a fellow member Mr. S79 of her armed group who also hails from the village to terrorize and intimidate fellow villagers. He intimidated a widow and her family for supporting the Congress party in the election. It so happened that the widow's husband was an agent of the Congress party in the village even during previous elections. So, he threatened the family saying that supporters of Congress will be punished if Naga People's Front Party which the NSCN (IM) endorsed loses

⁵⁴Kalita Prabin, "82 per cent turnout in Manipur elections, militants kill five", Times of India, Guwahati, Jan. 28, 2012.

the elections in their constituency. He intimidated by taking down the names of her family and other villagers who supported the Congress party. The family was in a very bad condition. Her husband had passed away only a few months back due to AIDS, and she herself was in a bad health and so were her five young children. She and her entire family members contracted the disease from her husband who happened to be a drug abuser before they got married. The family has been surviving by running a small Pan shop and also by doing small agricultural cultivation and gardening. And to know that members of the NSCN (IM) had terrorized and intimidated the family was something unimaginable and inhumane.

Such kind of interference by the insurgent groups happens in almost every part of Manipur. For example, in the 2012 Manipur State Legislative Assembly elections, seven major insurgent outfits of the Meitei Community in the valley threatened the election campaigners of the ruling Congress Party in the state. In a joint statement, the insurgent bodies, who have a common goal of making Manipur an independent country, said elections were not meant to bring welfare to the people.⁵⁵ As a warning bombs were also exploded in Congress Party offices in different parts of Imphal.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the past had confirmed in its reports of an alleged nexus between insurgent outfits and politicians, including at least five Ministers of the State government. The outfits with which the Ministers are alleged to have links include the NSCN-K, the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), KangleiYawolKunnaLup (KYKL-O) and

⁵⁵ "Manipur insurgent threaten action against Congress supporters," Jan 06, 2012. <https://www.ndtv.com/assembly/manipur-insurgents-threaten-action-against-congress-supporters-570874> accessed on Jan 07, 2012

The seven organizations are United National Liberation Front (UNLF), Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), KangleipakCommunist Party (KCP), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), PREPAK-Progressive and nited People's Party of Kangleipak.

Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA). A raid by Special Forces personnel on November 28, 2000 at the official residence of the Transport Minister, HaokholetKipgen, led to the arrest of two Kuki National Front (KNF) insurgent, and the Central government announced an investigation into the clandestine alliance between the politicians and terrorist groups in Manipur.⁵⁶

Extortion and Taxes by the Insurgents/Non-state actors

One of the biggest problems faced by the civilians in Manipur today is extortion. Taxes are collected through every way possible, starting from small shops to big enterprises, vehicles, government contracts, etc. In fact, even government officials allegedly pay these taxes. It is very surprising that in all four districts inhibited by the Nagas, 2% of salary from the government employees (including the police) is taxed every month by the NSCN (IM). The question is no longer just about the collection of tax, but how they have been able to penetrate and command government institutions and administration. This clearly shows the failure of the State. There are four active Naga insurgent groups operating in Manipur, who are all fighting to have a share of their own at the expense of the civil population. The most worrying part is that, people are finding it hard pay to several groups that operate in the region. And it is for this reason that insurgent groups are trying to establish their stronghold in as many regions as possible so that they could enjoy the privilege of collecting taxes. One just cannot say no to them. Their guns and bullets speak, the civil citizens listen to it silently as they fear for their lives. Other taxes include road tax, house tax, business tax, contract tax, etc.

⁵⁶AjaiSahni, "The terrorist economy in India's Northeast: preliminary explorations" <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume8/Article5.htm> , accessed on March 21, 2014

The logic is that it is impossible for the civilians to give taxes to each and every group. According to one estimate, the annual budget of the NSCN-(IM) alone ranges from 200 crores to 250 crores.⁵⁷ If such a budget is to be multiplied by the numbers of insurgent groups functioning in the state, one could in a way figure out the amount of money being collected from the ordinary civilians. Apart from this, there are many more of such extortions and taxes being collected by the members of various groups for personal gain. Money extortion may have given the insurgents in Northeast India a secure financial base to pursue their separatist agenda, but it has also corrupted the movements. In July 2011, a personnel of 8 Manipur Rifles was caught by youth volunteers while demanding money in the name of one militant group. It was learned that the extorted money that he collects were shared with the militant groups. This very example shows how even a state army could be a pro-militant/militant and that anyone can fake to be a member of a militant group for the purpose of looting others. There are ample evidences of scenarios such as this in Manipur today.

In one of my visits to a private school in a small town, I learned that a Naga insurgent group had demanded money from the school a few days back. The demand was set on such a condition that the principal was asked to pay Rs. 5000 that very day as tax. Since he had no money at that very point, he had to go and borrow money from a shop that he knows. The school had just started running for about three years and they have not even fully finished the construction of the school. Most of the students come from neighboring villages. And I found that there are students who have not even paid their school fees for the last six months, and also had pending fees from the

⁵⁷ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "North-east: 'Minimal Gains of Counter-insurgency Operations'", in D. Chandran Suba and P.R. Chari, *Armed Conflict in South Asia 2009: Continuing Violence, Failing Peace Processes*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), p. 141.

previous year. To him, since the whole purpose of starting a school was to impart education for all, it was impossible for him to stop students attending schools just because they are unable to pay their fees. The parents of such students would come and beg the principal to wait for some more time for the payment. So, making a profit out of running a school for him was out of question. He could hardly manage the payment of salary for the school teachers, and in fact, he had spent so much of money from his own pocket by selling lands and other properties of his family. The principal was frustrated by the behavior of the armed groups, and he even doubted if the collection of taxes was from the organizations. According to him S54, “it is very much impossible to have a normal conversation or discussion with such members. All that they know is to intimidate, threaten and use force. We don’t have much option, but to pay them and risk our lives and the lives of the school children.”⁵⁸ There are many people who want to do good for the society, like the fellow who started the school to impart education for the people of the town, knowing that there are no proper schools for the people residing in villages around the town. And if the armed groups fail to understand that very objective, then I think there is nothing to say about such armed groups.

In March 2001, Meitei militant groups of the valley demanded Rs. 40 lakhs from eight Catholic missionary schools located in Imphal. When the school authorities expressed their inability to pay, the militant group imposed a fine of Rupees two crore and ordered them to close down. The matter was raised in Manipur State assembly and was reported that security around the schools had been increased. But, in May 2001, three missionaries of the schools were gunned down, apparently

⁵⁸ Interview with the Principal, S54 (Age 41) of Chandel District on February 9, 2015.

because of non-payment of the taxes.⁵⁹ This is one example of the way violence and human rights are being violated by the non-state armed groups in Manipur. The catholic missionary schools are the best that one could find in Manipur, and having done a tremendous work in educating the children. It is hard to imagine the ignorance and violent activities being perpetrated by the so-called freedom fighters who claim to represent the people.

Conclusion

A movement that once enjoyed the spontaneous support of the masses, including women, as a morally just struggle is now perceived by many as corrupt and illegitimate due human rights violations. And under the circumstances of conflict, women as a group have been easily targeted as they constitute the weaker section of the society. Women's rights and freedom are taken away in the name of preserving one's culture and community. And a woman's body also becomes a site of everyday battle for various opposing parties.

⁵⁹ Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 62.

Chapter 5

Socio-economic Impact of Violence and armed conflict

Armed conflict has direct and indirect consequences, and women as a group are arguably more affected than their male counterpart in conflict situations. It exacerbates inequalities in gender relations that already exist in society. It exacerbates inequalities in gender relations that already exist in society. This chapter will look into various direct and indirect impacts of violence and armed conflict on Naga women and the society at large.

Social Impacts

One consequence of armed conflict is the increase in the number of households headed by single women as a result of their husbands being killed in conflicts. Armed conflicts greatly affect the lives of women and can completely change their role in the family, the community and the 'public' domain. The breakdown or disintegration of family and community networks forces women to assume new roles. Armed conflicts have created large numbers of female-headed households where the men have been conscripted, detained, displaced, have disappeared or are dead. Women invariably have to bear greater responsibility for their children and their elderly relatives, and often the wider community when the men in the family are gone. The very fact that many of the men folk are absent often heightens the insecurity and danger for the women and children left behind, and accelerates the breakdown of the traditional protection and support mechanisms upon which the community, especially women, have previously relied upon.

There are also ‘conflict wives’ referring to women marrying soldiers of both the State and insurgent who are then abandoned to their fate when they moved to another region. Such phenomenon particularly happens in places where there are military camps. MrsE3¹ was married to an Indian army who hails from mainland India in 1995 when he was posted in her town. But he never took her and their child to his hometown or with him when he left for another posting. She was assured that he will take her with him someday, but it never happened. For a few times, he visited her when he was posted in other places, and he would also send her money order. But with the passage of time everything stopped. In order to support herself and the child she started brewing local alcohol. Her profession of brewing is not considered morally right in the society, and it is also prohibited. Since brewing was meant for selling, people from all walks of life come to her to buy, and this doubled the moral policing towards her as someone with low character and the like. For a TangkhulNaga woman, to marry someone from mainland India is not appreciated. But to marry a mainland Indian who is also an army is socially not accepted as they are considered as the enemy or the other. But to be married to Indian army personnel who people have so much of hatred for was something unimaginable both from the family and the society at large. Her family and society thought that she is morally served right by her husband’s abandonment. She is now further isolated from her family and the society.

There is also the increase number of women known as ‘Half-Widows’, women whose husbands have disappeared. Women whose husbands have ‘disappeared’ or are

¹Interview with Mrs. E3 of Senapati town, on March 12, 2014.

missing experience many of the same problems as widows, but without official recognition of their status, which again creates many problems for them.

Reports suggest that there are large numbers of widows in Manipur whose husbands have been killed due to armed conflict. According to BinalakshmiNepam, founder of Manipur Women Gun Survivor Network, over 20,000 people are said to have been killed in the last five decades and an average of 300 widows are created every year in Manipur due to the ongoing conflict.² The only scheme available for widows is under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) for a sum of Rs. 300 pm for widows living below poverty line within the age of 40-59 years.³ In Ukhrul District, only 272 widows have benefitted from the scheme.⁴ In many cases there are several restrictions placed upon their mobility, the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the people they come in contact with. Not only that, widows who have lost their husbands in connection with militancy do not make the cut for widow pension scheme and their children are not eligible for state sponsored scholarships.⁵ Young widows are also forced to head households; yet, in a patriarchal system they have little or no access to land and property. The increase in widowhood has led to the emergence of the Manipuri Women Gun Survivors Network with an attempt to help them economically by giving them training on weaving, tailoring, handloom, handicraft etc., and giving them the capital to start such small-scale enterprise.

² Interaction with BinalakshmiNepam's during one of her informal talk on "Women in Armed Conflict Manipur" at the University of Hyderabad, October 2015.

³ "Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)," *Ukhrul District, Government of Manipur*. <https://ukhrul.nic.in/scheme/indira-gandhi-national-widow-pension-scheme-ignwps/>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-manipur-elections-2017-a-history-of-fake-encounters-opens-up-old-wounds-ahead-of-polls-2333199> , accessed on Feb 27, 2017

Impoverished women without family or resources are more likely to be caught up in wrong side of sex trade, drug peddling etc. and these are exactly what is happening in state like Manipur. Thus, in a patriarchal society women are placed structurally and socially at a disadvantaged position. According to Mrs. E4, a widow who lost her husband due to AIDS said, “The life of a widow is very hard, and everyone knows that. But what bother me the most is that the society has become so judgmental about what I do and where I go. If I dress up well and go out to market or to town, people from my village look at me, a look which is uncomfortable and which says a lot.”⁶ Status of women as wives within Naga society like most communities is largely one of material dependency and inequality.

It is very common thing to hear from people say on widowers, ‘He needs someone who will cook, wash and take care of him and the children.’ The saying clearly reflects the reality of roles and status of women in Naga society. But, for a widow who has children, to remarry in a Naga society is a very complicated issue. First of all, the society does not expect a widow to remarry. Widows who have not remarried are respected in the sense that she is regarded as a good mother who believes in one love and one marriage. She is considered a strong woman who loves and cares for her kids. But for a man it is not the case. I have come to know of a grandfather aged 75 getting remarried with a 40-year-old lady with the help of his family members after the death of his wife, and then having a son from the second marriage. He died by the time his son was 9 years and thus leaving behind a son without a father and a wife without a husband. Society does not really question about the left behind widow and her child. The society and

⁶ Interview with Mrs. E4 (45 years) of Chandel District on Sept. 14, 2015.

family were totally in support with the grandfather remarrying and having a child at that age just because he needed someone to take care of him. And at the same time, a widower will look out for woman who has not married or who doesn't have children in case if she was married in the past.

In Naga society people become very judgmental on widows who want to remarry. At the same time, it is difficult for a widow to remarry because a bachelor will not normally look for a widow who already has kids as it would mean a burden. It is also unlikely for bachelors marrying a widow or women who have already married in the past, for a reason that he will be looked down upon as some incapable of finding a proper wife or life partner. So, it becomes extremely difficult for a widow to get remarried coupled with many other factors. For example, widowed women may decide not to remarry for a number of reasons - to avoid the possibility that their children may not fare well with a new father or avoid being further alienated from the community.

In situations where a widow remarries, the children are to be left behind with her husband's family according to the customary laws. There are cases where the mother is allowed to take the female child with her, but the family and clan will never allow a male child to go with the mother if she wants to remarry, as the male child is considered the heir of the family lineage and female child is not. Ms. E5⁷ was in a relationship with a Naga insurgent when he was stationed in the neighboring village. They were in love and he had promised to marry her, and out of wedlock she gave birth to a male child. But soon she was abandoned by the insurgent when he was stationed somewhere else. She alone raised the child for six years, when finally, the family members of the insurgent

⁷ Interview with Ms. E5 (28 years) of Tamenglong District on October 11, 2013.

suddenly appeared in her village to take away the child. There was nothing she could do, as according to the customary law the male child belongs to the father. And the child cannot have the surname of the mother's family nor will he be considered a member of the village or clan. In other words, the child will be considered a nameless or a lost child who doesn't belong to any clan, until and unless he is taken by the father's family. Even if the father's family doesn't want to accept the child, the clan of the deceased village will not let the family forsake the child as it would mean a shame for the clan. Thus, in a patriarchal Naga society, a male child will never be forsaken even in times of crisis as he has the support of the family, the clan and the society at large.

Breakdown of Trust

Since humans are social animals, individuals are bound to interact with the people living in the environment. But this has become problematic for people living in areas of armed conflict due to trust deficit. For example, women who are in touch with the Indian armed forces are looked upon with suspicion as being an informer for the State or are treated as prostitutes. E6,⁸ who sells vegetables, fruits, local bread made of sticky rice and cooked food to army personnel who are camped nearby her village would regularly go to the army gate and sell them to make a living. But to her surprise there were rumors about her selling her body or spying for the army. It doesn't bother her much as she is making a living out of the goods sold to the army personnel, but at the same time she doesn't want to hear them either. To live in a conflict zone, one cannot escape from one another, as people are bound to come into contact with both the state and non-state armed actors as they live in the same surroundings. And these have led people to become very suspicious

⁸Interview with E6(35 years) of Tamenglong District on September 05, 2013.

of one another. In such a situation there is no doubt that there are people who do take advantage by getting involved as informers, etc. Living in a situation of conflict, the civilian population especially the civil society leaders are bound to interact with both the State forces and insurgents. For example, in 2008, Seram Shanti Devi, a *MeiraPaibi*⁹ secretary of the NongpokLeimarolApunbaMeiraPaibiLup, a joint organization of 12 villages who campaigned against drug abuse, alcoholism, human right violation by security forces was shot dead in front of her family by members of People's Liberation Army, on the ground that she was working as an 'informer' for the Indian army. But according to her son EM7, "My mother was an innocent victim. She was a single mother and the head of the family who took care of us. On that fateful night at about 9 pm about 5 or 6 armed men in full uniform came and shot my mother at point black in the courtyard after asking us to come out of the house. I was also badly beaten and threatened of life after they shot my mother. They are nothing more than goons and killers. They even lied in their press statement after the incident that they had given us many warnings in the past etc., but we absolutely have no idea. We still don't know the reason as to why my mother was killed."¹⁰ Women leaders and activists are also specifically targeted if they are very vocal about the rights of women or if they speak out against the atrocities of the state and non-state armed actors alike.

During conflict, gender stereotyping is often reinforced and control over women's freedom of movement or activities outside the home may be increased. For example, students living in the village/rural reaches the level of high school, they have to walk

⁹ Literally it means "torch bearer", any adult women could become a part of this grassroots organization which fights for social, political and economic issues.

¹⁰ Interview with EM7 of Nongren, Imphal East on September 21, 2014.

miles every day in order to attend school in neighboring villages, towns or district where there are proper schools. In most cases, children move to small towns by living in rented houses in order to attend schools and colleges. With no one to take care of them, they have to self-parent themselves by doing the domestic chores like cleaning, cooking, etc. as their parents are busy working in the fields to make their ends meet. Under such circumstances, many children and youth get into various types of substance and drug abuse, experimenting their sexuality, which results in increased number of Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (hereafter, STD/AIDS) teen pregnancy etc. The students would either go home from time to time to collect food supplies and other necessities or their parents would bring their needs. It is disheartening to see young children doing everything by themselves in order to get basic education. Moreover, there are others who cannot even get the privilege to basic education. There is also the fear of sending a girl child to school where they have to walk for miles every day. The parents fear that their daughters might become victims of sexual assault, abduction, attack, harassment from the State forces and more recently from the non-state armed actors and also from other men. There is also the fear of journey to and from school where they have to pass jungles and state forces' checkpoints. As a result, it is more likely that parents stop their daughters from attending schools.

Advocates of education for girls suggest that by going to schools the girls may learn information and skills that will help them cope with the challenges of their situation through literacy and numeracy, problem solving, and critical thinking, and may enjoy the

benefit of being in school with friends, and of being engaged in different activities.¹¹ However, in Naga society a girl child is also more likely to be withdrawn from school than the boys due to fees and other costs. According to a report, school (class I-10th) dropout rate has increased from 54 percent during 2001-2002 to 71 percent during 2011-2012 in the state against the substantial decline for the country from 66 to 50 percent during the same period.¹² According to Ministry of Human Resource Development (hereafter HRD), the primary level drop-out rate in Manipur in 2014-2015 is 18 percent as against the national average of 4.3 percent.¹³ HRD Minister Smriti Irani said that one of the major reasons for female students dropping out of schools was the lack of proper toilet facilities for them.¹⁴

If the situation arises where the parents are to decide on whom they would choose to send to school, based on their economic condition, it will always be the boy. It is also due to this system that a male child will at some point of time become the heir to the family and would also be responsible for taking care of the parents. While a girl child will at some point of time become a member of some other family through marriage. It is not considered wise to give equal opportunities to boys and girls. The opportunities are mostly given to the male child first. Hence there is no doubt about the preference of a male child in the Naga society. However, in well-to-do families, children irrespective of

¹¹ Jackie Kirk, "Gender Based Violence in and around Schools in Conflict and Humanitarian Context", in Geraldine Terry and Joanna Hoare, ed., *Gender Based Violence* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2007), 122

¹² Reimeingam Marchang, *The Plight of Education in Manipur*. Epao, May 12, 2018. http://epao.net/epPageExtractor.asp?src=education.The_plight_of_education_in_Manipur_By_Reimeingam_Marchang.html. Accessed on May 13, 2018.

¹³ School drop-out rates: National average decreases, North-East states increases. India Today, New Delhi, May 6, 2016. Other states of Northeast: Nagaland 19.4 percent, Mizoram 13 percent, Arunachal Pradesh 10.9 percent, Meghalaya 10.3 percent, Assam 7.4 percent, Sikkim 4.6 percent, and only Tripura 3.6 percent was lower than the national average. <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/drop-outs-in-north-east-india-322042-2016-05-06>, accessed on June 11, 2018.

¹⁴ Ibid.

their gender are given equal opportunities. So, in situation of Indo-Naga armed conflict which has been going on for six decades, the girl child has always been at a disadvantaged position when compared to the male child. Equally important is the notion that daughters are more capable in helping their parents in domestic chores than their sons. Looking after other younger siblings when the parents are at field, and helping out parents in the field itself are some of the work that parents expect their daughter to be good at. These are some reason why girls are barred from attending schools among the poorer sections of the Naga society.

One common policy of the Indian armed forces is to occupy strategic locations in civilian areas including civil buildings, schools, colleges, private buildings, and so on. Unfortunately, Manipur University is also among one of the institutions where Indian security camp is being set up within the university, not sparing the university from military operations. Education has been negatively influenced by a general destruction of the educational infrastructure and the occupation of schools by military.

According to Subramanian, the right of the indigenous children to receive education in their own language, to be familiar with their own histories and cultural values has also been denied.¹⁵ And for example, funds for basic education and nutritional scheme such as mid-day meal for government schools is siphoned off at different levels and does not reach the schools on a regular basis. As per the allowances, students from First to Fifth Standards are supposed to get a meal of 100 grams, while students of Sixth to Eight standards are supposed to get a meal of 150 grams. Apart from that many government schools have inadequate infrastructure, and staff. At times, even if the

¹⁵ K.S. Subramanian, *Political Violence and the police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007), 205

teachers are assigned, they would not turn up as they do not want to live in remote villages. Instead, the assigned government teacher would employ someone from the village (untrained and unqualified) to teach in his/her place by paying a meager amount. According to a village headman, complaints after complaints have been lodged, but nothing has changed.¹⁶ This clearly shows a sign of corrupt government officials and institutions in the armed conflict state of Manipur.

In Naga society, there are many norms which are gender biased. Women and girls are expected to behave in certain ways that are not applicable to men and boys. For example, if women are sexually abused when she was out during night, the society will firstly blame the woman for going out at night. They will question her need to go out at night, etc.. There are also interesting norms in food consumption in Naga society which most Nagas do not see it as gender bias. Men will always be served first during meals. For example, it will be the father or the son who will be served the best portions during meals. If the father or the son is absent during a family meal, it will be made compulsory to see that their share is taken properly taken care of. Men in the family will have their first choice of food followed by women. This in itself creates hierarchy in the family where men are more privileged than women. It may also be added that a male member is also most likely to have a larger share of the food in a family, and this is largely observed in economically rural areas. As for example, if there is a shortage of food on the table the mother will sacrifice her share of food, and this in turn creates a norm which directly or indirectly implies that the other girls in the family should act the same way as the mother. In a conflict situation where food is scare, women are more prone to malnutrition than

¹⁶ Interview with Headman of Zingsui Village on February 06, 2014.

men. Cultural factors contribute to this situation where tradition often dictates men are to eat first, followed by women.¹⁷

Impact on Children

Children are the most vulnerable and easy victims of armed conflict and are affected by it in many ways. Most children in some way or the other has witnessed, survived or are victims of armed conflict between the state and the insurgent groups. Naga children among other civilians also constitute the bulk of victims in armed conflict. Children lose their parents, relatives and become orphaned and are left without care. Since children are particularly vulnerable to violent conflict, the atrocities they witness or experienced disrupt their emotional and psychological developments to certain extend of their formative years. As their families are broken up and large social institutions cease to function, children are denied long lasting relationships of affection as well as stable ground upon which to develop physically, intellectually, and in moral terms.¹⁸ Such is the story of Michael; a 7 year old boy who had witnessed tear gas and gun shots in his village on May 06, 2010 (popularly known as Mao Gate Incident) by Manipur security forces is trying to come in terms with his normal life. According to the mother, E8, “My son has become mentally unsound after witnessing rampant violence in the village. He freaks out when he hears loud noise which resembles gun shots and the like. Whenever he comes across Indian security forces or men with security uniform, he either trembles or runs away. His life has not been the same as it used to be after witnessing these

¹⁷Judith Gradam and Hilary Charlesworth, “Protection of Women in Armed Conflict,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Feb., 2000), pp. 148-166, 125

¹⁸ Harry G. West, “Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of Frelimo’s “Female Detachment”, *Anthropology Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 4, Youth and the Social imagination in Africa, Part 2, (Oct., 2000) pp. 180-194, p. 180.

incidents.”¹⁹ And the irony is that the boy’s father is in Indian army, the Assam Rifles. But she hopes that things will get better for him with time. Children in conflict zones who have witnessed violence, have lost family members or friends suffers from severe trauma.

Because of scars of ‘trauma’ borne by these children for the rest of their lives, it is argued, these children come to constitute as to what is termed as a “lost generation.” As social norms breakdown, families have to bear the burdens of the traumatized and alienated youth. Children whose parents had been killed or tortured by the State forces also become the potential recruit for insurgents. Such children would hold the Indian army as the main enemy of his family and the society at large, and the sole purpose of joining the Naga insurgent group is nothing but to take revenge for the crime committed to his family. The logic is the same if the perpetrators are by the insurgents. In a sense this is how the cycle of violence continues in the Indo-Naga armed conflict for decades without an end. Violence results in more violence both for the Indian State as well as for the Nagas.

Children not only bear the brunt of armed conflict but they also become victims of underage recruitment as child soldiers. As a result, child soldiers not only lose their childhood and opportunities for education and development but they also risk physical injury, psychological trauma and even death. With the presence of large number of children as insurgents, it has led to the targeting of children especially boys by the Indian army as they believe that they are the future insurgents.

¹⁹ Interview with E8 (30 years), Song song Village, Senapati District on February 10, 2015.

There is also an increase in drug abuse among children and youth in the Naga society. The earlier trend of the use of drugs among the youth was confined to towns, but in the recent scenario drug abuse has become rampant even in remote villages. One interesting observation in a village where there is a high rate of drug abuse among the youth was that almost all of the drug peddlers are the women of the village. The activities of the women drug peddlers are like open secrets among the villagers. According to E9, an elder woman and a leader of the village, “Life in the village has become so complicated. In the past there used to be so much of co-operation among the villagers to deal with such situations. But now the whole village governing system seems to have broken down. Everyone is busy with their own life, trying to make a livelihood, and some in easy ways. In the past, people listen to elders and leaders, but now nobody seems to really bother. If we try to correct people’s wrong doings, we become their enemy. So, it is very difficult.”²⁰

Mental and Psychological Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease and infirmity.”²¹ Health is perhaps the most prized possession of an individual. Under the AFSPA, the health of the people has not only been neglected but also actually subjected to abuse. This has led to increased cases of post-traumatic stress disorder in regions under

²⁰ Interview with E9(69 years) of Chandel District on August 01, 2014.

²¹ “World Health Organization.” https://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/ accessed on Oct. 12, 2015.

AFSPA.²² Similarly, the army personnel posted in areas under AFSPA have also been affected; they are under constant stress, especially as they view the entire population as their enemy.²³ The powers vested to Indian army under AFSPA makes them even more dangerous in conflict region of Manipur. The human rights violations and violence by the insurgents are equally responsible for the rise of mental and psychological disorders. One such example is the story of Mrs. E10 (70), “Me and my husband were threatened by an insurgent who is relative of us in a drunken state for some minor family misunderstanding. He came and banged our door with his AK-47 while we were sleeping and woke us up. He then threatened to shot and kill us both. It was then that I fainted out of fear. When I got back to my senses, my husband told me that the insurgent left feeling a little scared as I fainted. He even threatened to kill my children who were studying out of the town. Till date, we have not told about the incident to our children as it would create more problems. After the incident life has not been the same for me, I started having hypersensitivity, increased startlet responses, forgetfulness etc. And as a result, I also have had a minor heart attack.”²⁴

During one of my travels in a taxi in Manipur, four Naga women who were roadside vendors in Lamlong market included me in their chit chatting thus, “While we were selling vegetables in the Lamlong market, someone threw out something in a black plastic bag from a running vehicle. We all started running frantically thinking that it might be a bomb. Right beside our stalls, there were some police commandoes standing, so we thought that those in the vehicle were targeting the police. We left all our

²² KhatoliKhala, *The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Its Impact on Violence against Women in Nagaland* (New Delhi: Wiscomp,2003), 32

²³ Ibid, 35

²⁴ Interview with Mrs. E10 (70 years) of Chandel District on October 3, 2014.

belongings like chappals and all the vegetables. After seeing us, even the police started running. Later it was found that the plastic contains only garbage. After coming back to our places and realizing it was not a bomb, we all laughed. Even the police were laughing.” There is so much of fear and insecurity in conflict areas as seen from this incident. But in these situations, there is also an element of momentary joy.

In conflict a large part of the population is likely to show Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (hereafter, PTSD). There is a high prevalence of mental health trauma among the civil population in Manipur. According to a study by Dr. RK Lenin, Asst Prof. Psychiatry department Regional Institute of Medical Science, Manipur, “approximately 10% of the total population in Manipur suffers from mental illness, out of which 1% are very severe. Accordingly women come to him for treatment in extreme cases, when pathological problems manifest in themselves in the form of severe headaches, backaches, depression or general ill health”.²⁵ Also, a study conducted by the same department during the ethnic conflict in Manipur from November 1997 to April 1998 showed that 70% of the people under study were affected with anxiety disorder, 48% with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, 44% with depression and 20% with psychosomatic disorders.²⁶ There is a need for long term psychological assistance for conflict survivors and for people living in such zones to help them cope or to get them back to normal. But the reality is that there are hardly any support services provided to women, particularly for dealing with sexual and psychological effects.

²⁵North East Network, *Violence against Women in North East India* (New Delhi: National Commission for Women, 2004), 31

²⁶Ibid. 31. Psychosomatic disorder is a disease which involves both mind and body. Some physical diseases are thought to be particularly prone to be made worse by mental factors such as stress and anxiety. One's current mental state can affect how bad a physical disease is at any given time. Example, high blood pressure, heart disease.

Trafficking of Women and Children

A study on the impact of conflict on women of Manipur will not be complete without discussing the newly emerging phenomenon of trafficking of women and children. The prolonged violence has resulted in large scale migration for better opportunities among the Nagas in Manipur to other states of India. While globalization has created economic opportunities for women in some areas, many have also been trapped in exploitation of various kinds. And without proper support system, they have become vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) defines human trafficking as the recruitment and transportation of persons within or across national boundaries by force, fraud, or deception, for the purpose of exploiting them economically.²⁷ Trafficked people mostly work as prostitutes, domestic helpers, and in manufacturing industries, etc.

Trafficking and sexual exploitation of human beings particularly women and children tend to increase during armed conflict. The breakdown of law and order, police functions, and border controls, combined with globalization's markets and open borders, contributes to an increase in the trafficking of human beings. Women also often resort to prostitution as a coping mechanism to survive conflict. With economy in shambles, it is hard to earn a living. Consequently, a number of women end up getting into commercial work or become drug peddlers to sustain themselves and their children of the basic necessities of life. Poor economic systems in conflict have led to increased feminization of poverty leading to the exploitation of women and girls through prostitution and human

²⁷ Levy Berrie, *Women and Violence* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 48

trafficking. In conflict zones where there is a structural breakdown and economic crisis women are forced into prostitution to obtain basic necessities. Prostitution around army camps and police stations are very common. Because of armed conflict many young men and women from rural areas in Manipur have migrated in large scale to cities and town for better opportunities. And without proper knowledge about the cities they become extremely vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and violence.

The United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that each year 2 million girls aged between 5 and 15 are introduced into the commercial sex market.²⁸ These girls are often maltreated by law enforcement authorities. They are prone to physical assault, arbitrary arrest and sexual harassment. In some cases, the police are part of the prostitution business. Still, others attempting to escape from conflicts for better future have become victims of traffickers. In March 2013, TangkhulShanao Long (Tangkhul Women's Union Delhi) along with the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Rajasthan, Social Workers, and media rescued 53 children from Grace Home in Jaipur run by one Jacob John, a Christian pastor. Out of the total, 23 were Nagas from Manipur, which includes 14 girls and 9 boys. According to the Chief Medical Officer of Ukhrul District Hospital, 13 girls who were all in between the age of 9-20 years were found to be sexually assaulted after medical examination.²⁹ According to sources, Jacob had first visited Ukhrul District in Manipur in 1997 when he was working as a pastor in Jaipur and he had also preached in few churches in Ukhrul district. Most of the children were said to

²⁸ MarieVlachovd and Lea Biason, "Women in an Insecure World. Violence against Women: Facts, Figures and Analysis"(Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic control of Armed Forces, 2005), 12 https://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/women_insecure_world.pdf, accessed on May 21, 2014

²⁹ Interview with Chief Medical Officer, Ukhrul District Hospital on October 9, 2013.

be taken out of the state during 2004 to 2009 on the promise of giving free and better education. According Mrs. EM11, whose four children were among the rescued (3 girls aged 17, 11, 9 and a boy of 15 years), “We sent our children in the hope that they may become educated and live their future life in dignity. But look at us now. The pain is beyond words.”³⁰ This case is one of the many cases where children are trafficked across various Indian states by giving false promises of free education and a good job. The parents were easily fooled just because they trust in Christian missionaries. And for many poor parents in the villages who could not provide their children to go to schools or even give proper food on the table are easily persuaded by these traffickers. The economy is in shambles with total breakdown of most institutions leading to high rise of unemployment and instances mentioned above.

Rise of Drug Abusers and HIV/AIDS

India’s troubled Northeast lies on the western corner of Myanmar infamous Golden triangle, is one of the two largest opium producing regions in the world. The International Narcotics Control Bureau (INCB), in a global report, has said that more than 70% of the amphetamines³¹ available worldwide are produced in countries around the Golden Triangle particularly Burma.³² Heroin and Amphetamines are more likely to find their way into Indian cities and border towns on a much larger scale than ever. The threats posed by the increased drug trafficking to India is three-fold and to its sensitive NE region it is five-fold. Trafficking through NE has led to a rise in local consumption. The region’s drug addicts are estimated to be around 1,20,000 according to the Indian

³⁰ Interview with EM11, Ukhrul District. February 7, 2014.

³¹ Performance enhancing drugs

³² SubirBhaumik, *Troubled Periphery: The Crisis of India’s North East* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), 192.

Council of Medical Research, 2005.³³ Many addicts use intravenous injections and sharing of syringes which have led to many sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. A study conducted between early 1999 and 2018 has found that Manipur has the highest HIV prevalence rate among adults in the country at 1.06 percent, followed by Mizoram at 0.79 and Nagaland 0.76.³⁴ It is estimated that there are about 45,000 to 50,000 drugs addicts in Manipur of which nearly half are injecting drug users. Manipur has the highest percentage of female injecting drug users (28.2%) among all the northeastern states, according to a study done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2015.³⁵

According to E1, a drug addicted woman (25), “I have been using drugs for six years now. I want to stop and trying hard but I’m not able to. I wanted to go to a rehabilitation center but I cannot afford it. I can hardly manage my daily dose of drug. I would surely go if these centers were free.” According to E2, a neighbor of hers, “She uses drugs everyday. To pay for her daily dose, she steals from the villagers such as utensils, clothes, fruits and vegetables from the villagers’ farms. She was once even excommunicated from the village for her behavior. We have already beaten her many times. Even the neighboring villagers beat her so much. Many people mistake her for a

³³ Ibid, 192

³⁴ HIV prevalence rate highest in Manipur, finds study; Nagaland has over 22,200 cases, *Firstpost*, Kohima, March 22, 2018. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/hiv-prevalence-rate-highest-in-manipur-finds-study-nagaland-has-over-22000-cases-4400975.html> accessed on June 10 2018. India has 2.1 lakh people living with HIV cases.

The country, as a whole, has 21.1 lakh PLHIV cases and nine states — Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Rajasthan — account for 82 percent of those cases.

³⁵ Sarita Santoshini, “The Ascent of Manipur’s Women, and their Descent to Drugs.”

<http://www.indiaspend.com/cover-story/the-ascent-of-manipurs-women-and-their-descent-into-drugs-37705> (Accessed on Jan.4, 2018)

man, so when they caught her, they used to beat her up severely. She is like what we would call a tomboy.”³⁶

It is important to look at the environmental factors for the increase in vulnerable, young people taking drugs. Not one but many factors have been responsible for decades of armed conflict and violence, which have had a tremendous negative impact on the social, political and economic fabric of Manipur. There is a rapid rise in poverty and unemployment among the youth as there are few industries and private enterprises. According to official reports, there are 7,01,789 educated youth seeking employment in Manipur. the population of the state according to 2011 census is 27,21,756, and out of these, there are 2,01,327 girls listed in the employment exchange.³⁷ Government jobs are considered as the only stable means to have a decent life, as there is an absence of industries and private enterprises. Drug trafficking in Manipur began in the 1970's and by the 1980's it became a user state. It was also in the 1980s that the whole of Manipur came under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. It can be argued that the beginning of drug use and the spread of HIV/AIDS in Manipur is closely linked to the imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, and its consequences. The never-ending cycle of violence, rampant disrespect for human rights by the State and Non-State armed actors alike, insecurity for one's life, breakdown of social fabric, corruption and the like have led many youth including women in the state to a point of hopelessness and extreme distress. Hence, the easy availability of drugs in such an environment resulted in the vulnerability of the youth, trapping them in the pit of drugs usage.

³⁶ Interview with E1, Ukhrul District on Jan. 23, 2015

³⁷ Iboyaima Laithangbam., “Over 7 lakhs educated, unemployed in Manipur.” The Hindu, may 18, 2014.

As a result, incidence of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, alcohol and substance abuse increase substantially in such situations. The feminization of the AIDS epidemic is becoming all too apparent and the increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in situations of conflict is an area of growing social concern.³⁸ The demand for sex workers is also increased with the presence of armed forces in huge numbers. Women are pulled into this line of work and become pawns in a larger brutal network that thrives on human misery and conflict. Although many countries with high STD infection rates have not been at war, there is evidence that conflict contributes to HIV/AIDS transmission.³⁹ The military personnel are also particularly at risk—STD infection rates among armed forces are generally two to five times higher than civilians, although during conflict the difference can be over 50 times higher.⁴⁰ This is largely because the Indian army personnel are usually young, sexually active, single, and away from their spouses for a long period of time. This not only is a risk for the army personnel, but also to their spouses and children, and the society at large. The increase in the rate of HIV infection in conflict zones is also a worrying trend – women face an increased risk, and therefore need special psychological, health and social support. According to Subramanian, “Drug trafficking and HIV/AIDS are promoted as a result of conflict in Northeast where the disease, known as ‘hidden epidemic’ is spreading fast. Manipur being situated next to the Golden Triangle on the borders of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos, has become the gateway to the spread of

³⁸ *‘Bearing Witness’: The Impact of Conflict on Women in Nagaland and Assam* (New Delhi: Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research with support from Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2011), 11

³⁹ K.S. Subramanian, *Political Violence and the police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007) 191.

⁴⁰ TsjeardBouta, et al., *Gender, conflict, and Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2005), 37

HIV/AIDS in the South Asian Region.”⁴¹ Field studies have revealed that the health infrastructure in all the Northeastern states has suffered as a result of the violence.

There is a close intersection between HIV/AIDS and violence against women. HIV/AIDS has worsened the context in which the social and economic marginalization of women and the assertion of some dominant form of masculinity combine to make women increasingly subject to oppressive social structures and violence, yet this dimension of the pandemic is often ignored.⁴² Drug trafficking has not only led to the rise in local addicts, but also an increase in HIV positive cases as many addicts use intravenous injections and share syringes. This in turn has led to the spread of HIV through sexual encounters among youths and also through transmission from parent to child. There are many cases where entire family members are infected with HIV/AIDS under such circumstances. With the increase in poverty and economy in shambles many women including widows who have lost their husbands in armed conflict have resorted to prostitution as a means to survive in Manipur. The presence of armed forces in large numbers has also increases the demand for sex workers, and women of different background have been pushed into the profession. Thus, the risk of spreading sexually transmitted diseases is very high for everyone living in such environment. While many women and children have become direct/indirect victims of drug trafficking, some others have played a big part in drug trafficking and drug peddling in Manipur.

The Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren recently inaugurated a Special Court (Fast Track Court) to deal with drug menace and to facilitate speedy trial of

⁴¹ K.S. Subramanian, *Political Violence and the police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007), 191

⁴² Ceri Hayes, “Tackling Violence against Women: A worldwide Approach”, in Geraldine Terry et. al. ed., *Gender Based Violence* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2007), 3

offences relating to narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances.⁴³ Also considering that school dropout is also one of the major reasons for high prevalence of drug and substance abuse, he has assured that the government will re-admit 40,000 schools' dropouts due to financial issues under a special scheme. In an effort to avoid school drop-out rates, the BJP-led coalition government has launched two schemes – StartUP Manipur and LairikTamhanlasi (Let them Learn) by sanctioning a sum of 16 crores.⁴⁴

Drug menace has also led to increase in crime rates against women in both public and in private spaces. Drug abusers in order to pay for their daily doses of drugs have also resorted to crime such as theft, looting. Women as mothers/wives have taken the brunt of the menace due to the continuous demand for money from their addicted spouses and children, further resulting in domestic violence, rise in crimes.

Economic Impact

The impact of violence in conflict zones can also be seen in the economic and social spheres. In a conflict area, spaces especially women spaces become restricted and their mobility severely hampered. Women, particularly in the hilly regions of Manipur are unable to work for long hours in their fields. They are forced to go in groups or are accompanied by men for fear of assault from state armed force as well as from the non-state armed actors. This is because in conflict zones the bodies of women become the battle site for the armed actors who treat them as spoils of war. And this in a way promotes the patriarchal notion of men being the protector of women and children. Naga

⁴³“Manipur CM N Biren Singh inaugurates fast track court for drugs,” The Indian Express, April 10, 2018.

⁴⁴“Manipur launches scheme to stop school drop-outs,” *Northeast Now*, March 16, 2018. <https://nenow.in/education/manipur-launches-scheme.html> accessed on August 11, 2018.

women in the hilly and rural areas are unable to go to their fields and forests freely as there is always a fear of sexual violence from the state and non-state forces, and hence, fewer hours in the field mean that food security gets affected⁴⁵ as women contribute equally or more, than men in a household economy.

In hilly regions, during rice cultivation season (April-July) people are required to stay in the fields for the whole week and would return to their home only on weekends to observe the holy Sunday or to get their rations and other necessities for the coming week. According to Angela a farmer, they, “would walk about 7-10 km to reach their fields. So, it becomes impossible for us go and return on the same day. At the same time, now, we do not want to stay back in the fields for fear of violence from Indian army, insurgents and other armed gangs.”⁴⁶ Due to the prolonged conflict and with the situation getting worse ordinary citizens are unable to perform their daily chores. This has had a strong impact not only on their normal lives but also on their livelihood. The fear is just no longer about the Indian armed forces as it used to be before, but it has also now shifted to the non-state actors also due to their inhumane behavior, who, very often acting on community-based rivalry.

In the past people would also keep their harvested crops like yam, pumpkin, rice etc. in the field granaries. But now due to the rise of poverty, economic hardship and frustration many youths have become abusers of drugs and alcohol and hence a steep increase in theft, said Ms. Carrie. Many women have also resorted to making easy money

⁴⁵Preeti Gill, ed., *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2010), 9

⁴⁶ Interview with E12 (50 years) Chandel District on March 5, 2014.

by involving in illegal activities such as drug trafficking and peddling and sale of alcohol. Thus, conflict affects the whole system. In other words, the destruction of fields and farmlands has resulted in the loss of livelihood and food scarcity. Basic infrastructures like bridges, roads, shelters are also destroyed.

In Naga society, like most tribal societies, the economic burden is generally considered the primary responsibility of the women. Women perform all the task of daily chores like fetching water, cooking, washing, nurturing of children, taking care of the sick and the old age. The very nature of women's vulnerability often lies more in the fact that armed conflict has evolved to the extent that the civilian population is totally caught up in the fighting and women are frequently the ones trying to maintain and provide for the everyday survival of themselves and their families. The people living in the rural areas/villages are the ones who are the most affected in terms of economic hardship as agriculture and small-scale farming is the mainstay of their economy. This has led to the increase in feminization of poverty among many of such Naga women living in conflict. Feminization of poverty "is a change in the levels of poverty biased against women or female headed households. More specifically, it is an increase in the difference in the levels of poverty among women and men or among female versus male and couple headed households".⁴⁷

It is shocking to learn that there are large scale poppy plantations in many hill districts of Manipur. Neither the state police nor the state authority has done anything on

⁴⁷ Feminization of Poverty. <https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/feminization-of-poverty/> accessed on Sept. 23, 2016

such plantation. In my search for answer, I got to learn that the state police station under which the area falls were given taxes by the poppy planters. Not only that some militant groups which belong to the Kuki tribe are also part of the poppy plantation business in Manipur.⁴⁸ Poppy plantation can be seen in all hill districts of Manipur and it is very openly cultivated. And hence drugs like opium are more easily available than it used to be in the past, and with the rise of improper education facilities, deteriorating economic conditions, a sense of hopelessness and unemployment, youths are easily drawn towards drugs as an escape to the reality. And with the increase in drug use there is also the increase in theft and other crimes among youth. In Leingangching village, 38 Km from Imphal, on National Highway 202 poppy flowers bloom majestically in hectares across the mountain. And just beneath the mountain is stationed an Indian army camp, the Assam Rifle and a Police Station. The setting explains everything, of lawlessness, corruption and a fail state. According to a poppy planter, EM15, “started planting poppy in such large scale since 3 years back. We got the poppy seeds from Myanmar through local businessmen who deal with drug trafficking. We know that it is illegal, but we don’t have much option as this is our main source of income, for our livelihood.”⁴⁹ The opium extracted from the poppy is sold for Rs. 20,000 per kg in local market whereas marijuana which have been cultivated for decades in larger scale is sold for Rs. 700 per kg.

Mr. EM14 had been into all kinds of drugs for the past six years. He lost his father to AIDS, thereafter a total breakdown of the family as his mother, a HIV positive herself remarried another HIV positive man. He has been stealing every kind of things in and

⁴⁸ Interview with EM13, a Manipur state Police Officer on December 12, 2017.

⁴⁹ Interview with EM15, a Poppy planter of Leingangching Village, Ukhrul District on October 12, 2018.

around the villages in order to meet his daily dose of drugs. He recounted, “I learned that he had been caught stealing for more than ten times, and in each time, he has been beaten black and blue, but at the same time the people are scared of him being beaten to death. When I saw him, he looked in a very bad shape. He had been taken to jail by the people who caught him stealing, but the jail authorities itself do not want to put him looking at his condition. I wanted to stop. But you won’t understand how hard it is to even try. I was in a rehab for three months, but since my family could not afford to pay a fee of Rs. 2500 per month I was removed.”⁵⁰ When I met him, he was already in a very bad condition, with injuries all over his body from beating for theft. The relatives and the villagers had lost all hope in him that he would become normal again. He wanted to stop taking drugs and have tried in the past, but he had reached a stage where he needs help. This is where the importance of rehabilitation centre, counseling centre, etc. comes into picture. There is hardly any government or non-profit organization or centre looking into such issues, where citizens can be taken care of. Four months after the interview, he committed suicide by biting live electric wire.

One of the most irrational ways of disturbing the normal lives of the people in Manipur is the imposition of bandh and economic blockade. One of such examples was the indefinite economic blockade on two of Manipur’s national highway by the United Naga Council (hereafter, UNC) from November 1, 2016 for 139 days against the creation of 7 new districts in Manipur by the then Congress Government just before the state assembly election for political gain. The UNC were against the creation of such new districts in the four Naga inhabited districts without the consultation of the Nagas, and

⁵⁰ Interview with Mr. EM16 (20 years) from Chandel district on April 3, 2015

also against the encroachment of Naga areas for other newly created districts. As a result of the months of blockade, there were scarcity of supplies such as petroleum, medicines and other essentials. It greatly affected every section of the society including the Nagas due to such inhumane and illogical economic blockade. In retaliation, thousands of Central Armed police Forces⁵¹ were sent by the central government in order to tackle the situation. The armed forces were used in assisting convoys carrying essential commodities in the two highways. Many citizens of Manipur are very much against the heavy militarization and the presence of Indian army in the state, but many also at the same time fail to understand the need for it and why they are deployed in the state. In their service for the people, three security personnel were killed and over a dozen injured in the attacks by insurgents belonging to NSCN (IM).⁵²

The prices of petrol rocketed to Rs. 300 per litre and that of a cooking gas cylinder to Rs. 2000. According to Ms. E17, who sells fuel in black market openly, there is never a shortage of petrol and diesel even if there is economic blockade. It's just that the prices go up to maximum. They buy from dealers and re-sell them in the market, making a profit of Rs.20 per litre.⁵³ The point is that even if there are economic blockade, businessmen and people who are in contacts with official and politicians hoarded the essential commodities and then sell them at a maximum price in black market. That shows how few people with money and power take advantage of conflict in Manipur while majority of common people suffer.

⁵¹ According to Press Information of Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 175 Coys of Central Armed police Forces were sent to Manipur during the period, March 15, 2017.

⁵² "After over four months, Manipur blockade ends as BJB government takes charge," *The Hindustan Times*, March 20, 2017.

⁵³ Interview with Ms. E17 (52 years) in Imphal on December 23, 2016.

Several military, paramilitary and Non-State armed groups have been arrested for smuggling drugs in Manipur on many occasions. To add to this even the politicians, bureaucrats, and security officials have also been sucked into the business. On 24 February 2013, the police seized 5,880 strips of pseudoephedrine components worth 25 crores in Thoubal district from six individuals on their way to Myanmar. The case is classic in the sense that of the six individuals arrested, there included a Colonel of the Indian army, Ajay Chowdhury (PRO, Defence Wing), an Assistant Manager of Indigo airlines, and a Territorial Army jawan. They were caught in three official army vehicles with fake registration number. In connection, it also led to the arrest of a son of former Congress MLA T N Haokip.⁵⁴ The case is classic in the sense it involves Defence PRO Colonel Ajay Chowdhury, and Seikholen Haokip, son of one Congress MLA. It reveals a strong nexus between the men in uniform, the political class and the drug mafias contributing to the problem of drug menace in the state of Manipur. They used fake registration number plates on the three embossed with the word 'Army'. On interrogation, it was learned that they had used Col Ajay's official Gypsy in the previous business.⁵⁵ So one can imagine as to how many times and the amount of drugs that they must have had regularly transported using their status as men in uniform. These are well connected international drug traffickers. Normally, vehicles of security personnel are not intercepted or checked anywhere. Moreover, empowered by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, the 'Men in Uniform' have a free hand in misusing powers by taking advantage of the situation and engaging in illegal activities. It becomes an even more

⁵⁴ Crackdown on Drug Racket Continues. MLAs Son in Police Net, Remanded till March 8
<http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/24129-crackdown-on-drug-racket-continues-mla-s-son-in-police-net-remanded-till-mar-8/> Accessed on March 23, 2018.

⁵⁵ The Sangai Express, March 12, 201

dangerous environment if the personnel who are supposed to protect the civilians and maintain law and order indulge in drug abuse and other illegal activities. It has also become a very common phenomenon for the 'Men in Uniform' to be caught in drug trafficking, possession of drugs, or drug abuse. Unless checked firmly such trends will sink the morale of the security forces. Following the arrest, a large number of women anti-drug activists and leaders of 15 different organizations marched to Chief Minister's office demanding identification, punishment of drug smugglers and submitted a memorandum. There was also a demand for an investigation by Narcotics Control Bureau including other central agencies as people no longer trust the state government and its agencies on such matters of seriousness.⁵⁶

Mr. Stone works as a rifleman in Indian Reserve Battalion (hereafter IRB) in Manipur. He joined the IRB in 2011 by paying a sum of two lakhs. Even before his joining he was already addicted to drugs of various kinds. And now even in spite of being married with two kids, he still continues to take drugs. He was a spoilt brat ever since his teenage, and so his parents thought that the best way for him to get back to normal was to get him a job in the state police force. His parents got a loan from a local money lender to pay for his bribe to get the job, in spite of giving the opportunity to his elder brother. According to him, there are many like him in the police personnel who take different kind of drugs or are addicted to alcohol. It is not difficult to get drugs in Manipur.⁵⁷ He hardly ever goes for his duty. He would take unofficial leave anytime by paying the officer in-

⁵⁶ Anti-drug campaign continues, women march to CM's office.

<http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/tseitm-24193-antidrug-campaign-continues-women-march-to-cm-s-office/>

⁵⁷ Interview with Mr. EM18 (24 years) of Tamenglong District on April 23, 2014.

charge of his station. Such is the condition of the Manipur state forces which include the Manipur Police, Manipur Police Commandos, and Indian Reserve Battalion, etc. To get the job, one has to pay and for which there is no proper screening or background checkup. There have been instances where a person who is a Non-state armed actor also working in the state police.

The following month, in the same area three persons were arrested with heroin and Spasmo Proxyvon tablets, of which one person was identified as a former self-styled captain of NSCN-IM. Along with the drugs a camouflage uniform with a three-star shoulder tags were found.⁵⁸In one of my interviews with Mr. EM19, a member of NSCN (IM) on issues of drug trafficking, he said that he often goes to Myanmar to procure guns and at times he brings precious stones to sell here in Manipur. He, “doesn’t know about others, but as far as I am concerned, I don’t involve in smuggling of drugs. I also have once brought a 9 mm pistol and sold it to a person whose family was once attack by some unknown armed groups.”⁵⁹It was evident from the interview that Mark was not going to admit about his involvement in drug trafficking nor was he going to admit about the involvement of his other group members. According to one Manipur police officer, “We once caught a mini-truck in Manipur-Nagaland border loaded with the skin of pangolin to be transported to Myanmar. During the interrogation we came to know that it was brought from Arunachal Pradesh. But very soon we got a phone call from a high-ranking insurgent officer telling us to release the truck immediately. There was nothing we could do, so we released them. That is how powerful the insurgents are in Manipur. The

⁵⁸Ex-IM cadre among 3 held with drugs at pallel.<http://www.thesangaiexpress.com/24523-exim-cadre-among-3-held-with-drugs-at-pallel/> accessed on March 13, 2013

⁵⁹ Interview with EM19 (33 years) in Ukhrul Town on March 14, 2014.

insurgents are very much a part of all kinds of trafficking by involving directly or indirectly.”

As discussed above, drug and many other illegal commodities are trafficked by members of State armed forces, police, state official, insurgents and civilians alike in their own capacities. Intelligence sources indicate that narcotics trade has been lucrative enough to give rise to multitude of insurgent groups in the Indian state of Manipur.⁶⁰

According to drug analysts and officials concerned, the Pseudoephedrine Hydrochloride (PH)- content and Ketamine Hydrochloride (KH) content drugs manufactured in India are in high demand in illegal drug factories in South East Asia, including the Golden Triangle. These drugs are regenerated into other psychotropic drugs, and party drugs like ‘World is Yours,’ which has become so popular in recent times among the youth drug abusers as well as for the traffickers alike. Drug analysts and officials believe that the drug lords living outside Manipur and India pay a huge amount of money to influential people in the state to enable them to ferry the drugs from the manufacturing units in India to Myanmar.⁶¹

Women and Peace

In the mid 1990’s the gender dimension of peace and conflict started to appear on the international policy agendas. Two milestones were the Beijing Declaration Platform

⁶⁰ In K.S. Subramanian, *Political violence and Police in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007), 40

⁶¹ K Sarojkumar Sharma, “Manipur Haven for Smuggling Drugs into Southeast Asia,” *The Times of India*, Guwahati, Feb. 26, 2013. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Manipur-haven-for-smuggling-drugs-into-Southeast-Asia/articleshow/18682371.cms> Accessed on: March 23, 2018.

for Action (1995) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000). Both stressed the importance of women's equal participation and their full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as the need to increase women's role in decision making in conflict prevention and resolution, and post conflict reconstruction.⁶² Peace building is not just about ending the apparent, visible face of violence but it's an effort to reconstruct the society and bring about a transformation in the social structures that gives rise to the violence in the first place. Due to armed conflict, the Naga women/mothers have explored the option of non-violent reconciliation and of peace to negotiate in armed conflicts with the state and non-state actors as well. The theoretical debate around women and peace ranges from biological to cultural derivatives, to reason of 'justice', and finally to the simplistic assumption that women support peace because they suffer the most in conflict situations. It is also argued that in many conflict situations it is precisely the socially constructed gender roles that allow women a greater scope to become major advocates for peace and reconciliation between the government and the insurgent groups, and between various ethnic communities.

Traditionally, Tangkhul Naga women are known to have played a pivotal role in stopping inter-factional violence (head hunting) through the institution of *Phukreila*⁶³ The women who got married with a man of another village was known as *Phukreila*. During the period of head hunting and war, *Phukreila* would act as the mediator for her father's and her husband villages. They were also entrusted with the responsibility of helping the

⁶²TsjeardBouta, Georg Frerks, Ian Bannon, *Gender, conflict, and Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2005), 25

⁶³Phukreila means an ambassador of peace in Tangkhul Naga

wounded and the dead in the battlefield. They were the only ones who could move freely in times of conflict acting as mediators between villages. They were ensured complete protection and no warrior could touch her. *Phukreila* were held in high esteem, and as the ambassador of peace she would move freely in the villages without suspicion. These women enjoyed full diplomatic immunity and protection. She was called the peacemaker, the bearer of the torch of peace of the Naga inter-village head hunting war. The women would boldly enter the battlefields, intervene in the fighting and stop the fight between two enemy villages.⁶⁴ Harming *Phukreila* would have meant a war between all the villages combined and the breaker of the law.⁶⁵

The Naga women have been playing an important role in trying to bring about peace within the various non-state armed groups under the aegis of the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (hereafter FNR). Along with various Naga organizations, the Naga Mothers Association and the Naga Women's Union Manipur, the FNR brought six of the insurgent groups together on a common platform for dialogue, reconciliation and peace.⁶⁶ The process began on August 20, 2011, with the leaders acknowledging the hurt they had caused each other and apologizing for it. They also promised to work towards "the formation of one Naga National Government."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ In U A. Shimray, "Equality as Tradition: Women's Role in Naga Society", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, Issue No. 05, (Feb.,2-8, 2002). 377

⁶⁵ U A. Shimray, "Women's Work in Naga Society: Household Work, Workforce Participation and Division of Labor", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 17, (Apr. 24 -30, 2004), pp. 1698-1711, 1701

⁶⁶ Paula Banerjee et al., *Women, Conflict, and Governance in Nagaland*, (Kolkata: Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2012), 24

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 24

Two Naga women organizations spearheaded the movement for peace in the Naga conflict: the Naga Women's Union Manipur (NWUM) and its counterpart in Nagaland, the Naga Mother's Association (hereafter, NMA). The NWUM was an organization that stands for Naga women's rights, gender equality, dignity, human rights, peace, and the cause of Nagas. Apart from these, the NWUM also engages in training, workshops etc. for the Naga women in Manipur. The Naga Mother's demand, 'Shed no more blood', which echoes even today is not only a symbolic gesture of the rejection of violence, irrespective of the perpetrator, but also an acknowledgment of the link between peace, equality, and development.⁶⁸ However, the immediate challenge that faces Manipur women is to play a pivotal role in the peace process and help find a pragmatic solution to ending armed conflicts that have continuously ravaged the society for a long time. Women are frontrunners in the peace process; in their quest for peace, they have adopted various roles during conflicts and in post-conflict situations; as bread-winners, keepers of cultures and traditions, militants, patriots, and finally brokers of peace. The various women's movements that has cropped up in Manipur from a very basic survival instinct; they need to resolve situations of violence, coercion, unrest and armed conflicts.

On January 19, 2009, at 2 am the Assam Rifles numbering around thousand surrounded the heavily armed NSCN (IM) camp in Shirui Village in Ukhrul District. Barbed wire was circled and their supplies cut off. With the spread of the news TangkhulShanao Long (Tangkhul Women's League) from different parts of the district and women of neighboring villages came to the village and stood in the line of fire by

⁶⁸ Rita Manchandan, *We Do More Because We Can: Naga Women in the Peace Process* (Kathmandu: South Asia Forum for Human Rights, 2004), 11

forming human chain. Most of the men, girls and children were send far away from the village fearing that they will become the main target of the Indian army if violence breaks out. About 2000 women in rotations sat in the cold winter weather for 24 hours till 2nd February, singing, praying, playing games, asking both the groups not to resort to violence. They were concerned about the life of the cadres, the Indian army and the villagers.⁶⁹ But with the intervention of the Home Minister of Government of India, the issue was resolved without any bloodshed by shifting the members of the NSCN (IM) cadres to another undisclosed camp. Taking advantage of the situation during the period, the Assam Rifles personnel occupying the village forcefully took vegetables, chicken, firewood and other needs without paying any compensation. The villagers estimated the losses to about Rs.10 lakhs.⁷⁰

This is one way in which a woman in today's Naga society tries to carry forward the legacy of peace building and as mediator in times of conflict. The need for a platform not only to voice their concern of the aged long bloody conflict where women are caught in between the state and non-state armed actors but also between various factional Naga insurgents' groups has led to the establishment of Naga Mothers Association in 1984. Another important vision of the association was to combat the social evils such as alcoholism and drug abuse which were also very much inter connected with conflict. Women often identify informal peace processes as an opportunity to enter public and political arenas and to become organized, particularly in the non-governmental sector. But by and large Naga women are still very much excluded from formal peace process and decision making where they are not able to voice their concerns.

⁶⁹ Interview with E20, a member of Shirui Shano Long on March 21, 2013.

⁷⁰ Interview with EM21 Shirui Village Chief on March 21, 2013.

Conclusion

The chapter can conclude by saying that, women experience violence in armed conflict in diverse ways as victims, survivors, leaders and peacemakers. Because of their status in the patriarchal society, women are systematically excluded from decision making opportunities, and their contribution and experiences are mostly ignored in conflict. The impacts have brought about numerous gender specific disadvantages on the women in the Naga society. During armed conflict, women are susceptible to marginalization, poverty and suffering, with existing inequalities and patterns of discrimination tending to exacerbate. The impact of conflict is not just on the physical or emotional realms but is also seen in the economic and social spheres.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The thesis tries to highlight the insurgency and the counter insurgency measures taken up by the state, which have affected normal life in Manipur severely. It is the acts of subversion by Non-state armed groups that have prompted greater repression by the State. Violence is being used not only by the State, but also equally by the Non-State armed groups and conveniently in such a militarized place. The cycle of everyday armed violence has resulted in intimate personal consequences, and tends to feed other forms of violence between citizens, including at home, schools, streets, and the neighbourhood. The gender relations have also become more asymmetrical and violent due to decades of armed conflict. Violence and conflict have serious ramifications for civilians, particularly for women – it renders women at a disadvantage both structurally and socially. Not only are women subordinated by the culture and custom imposed on them in situation of conflict, but their lives are caught between two opposing parties, impacting their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The unwillingness of the Indian State to address the conflict issue in Manipur has greatly hampered the region in terms of its economy, social relations, gender relations and the over-all development of the place. The military measures it has taken up to control the people of Manipur have only worsened the situation instead of mitigating the problem.

All individuals if given the power have within them the potential to violate basic human rights and dignities. This is best explained by the actions of the Indian armed forces operating in the disturbed areas. They are empowered by the AFSPA, 1958. The

power vested on them allows them to resort to killings rather than gather evidence. Some, on the other hand, resort to killing for personal benefits such as promotions. The state forces serving in such conflict region are also at constant stress, as they are put under heavy duty to tackle insurgency, and knowing that they can be a victim anytime makes their lives miserable. They are also looked upon as outsiders and are viewed enemy by the entire population.

The impunity enjoyed through AFSPA are responsible for the arbitrary killings, extra-judicial executions, fake encounters and many other forms of violence. As evident from the experience of Manipur, it has proved that the justification for the imposition of AFSPA for the maintenance of law and order and national security is a wrong approach. It has not only failed, but has also brought about more dissent and alienation from the people of the region on account of rampant violation of human rights, breakdown of various institutions, lawlessness and insecurity. The arbitrary use of violence toward the civilians for decades has led to the undermining the rule of law and alienation of the people, who take up arms against the state for the injustice that the innocent citizens have gone through.

As a result of the continuous cycle of conflict, the state's counter-offensive has affected the domestic space as well. The use of rape by the security forces as not just accidental, but a form of collective punishment effectively dismantles the official war story. The use of rape as weapon of war challenges the presumption that sexual abuse of women is a consequence of militarization and underlines the fact that such violence is used to serve various ends. To believe that it is worth sacrificing all individuals' right and democratic values for the sake of counter insurgency, maintenance of law and order by

giving military the full power under AFSPA is a wrong approach. First and foremost, India should repeal AFSPA, or at least radically amend it. This would mean that the state security forces would function in line with the law, being accountable to the democratically responsible government and also this will also mean that the legal barrier for the criminal persecution of the members of state forces are removed.

Even if the State is to engage in counter-insurgency, it should be solely directed against the non-state armed groups and their collaborators. But what is evident in Manipur is that the state forces in their failure to engage and deal with the non-state armed actors, it terrorizes the innocent civilians including women and children. This in away give the credit to the insurgents to claim that the Indian democracy is a failure, and that the people will always be subjugated as long as they are under the occupation of India. The impunity enjoyed by the Indian security forces for the violence further give rise to the elements of injustice, hatred, and the anti-India feelings, leading to the taking up of arms. When the basic rights of the innocent citizens are snatched away by the state, it is morally justifiable for the minority groups to resort to political violence as they have little or no alternative in order to defend themselves. The resort to violence by various ethnic communities through their respective community armed groups including the Nagas in the northeast are the results of multiple issues such as historical independence, injustice, revenge, and self-protection.

The insurgents have also appropriated the meanings of gender and used it as a patriarchal social agenda by trying to take control of women and their bodies through various ways such as moral policing, character defamation, vilification, traducement etc. The Naga struggle for self-determination that once drew popular support of the masses

including the women is now perceived as corrupt and illegitimate due to violations of human rights and the crimes committed by the non-state actors. They don't seem to have any respect for fellow human beings and their rights. Many also believe that the so called freedom fighters have now become more like warlords and gangsters. They have been responsible for a series of bomb blast targeting both the State securities and individual civilians, causing fear, administrative disruptions, and committing all kinds of violence. Any forms of dissent or voices against their inhumane acts are barely tolerated and portrayed as betrayals of the national struggle. The real threat that people face today is the rampant criminalization of the non-state actors in the name of their struggle for self-determination and independence from the Indian state.

Some of the direct consequences of armed conflict on Naga women include physical abuse, sexual violence and psychological fear. Besides, the cultural norms placed on women have more repercussions, consequently affecting the whole society. Owing to these factors, there has been an alarming increase in incidences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). With the economy in shambles, there is also an increase in women involving in drugs trafficking and as well the abuse of drugs, rise of prostitution, and trafficking of women and children, enforced recruitment of children in armed groups, rise of sexually transmitted diseases etc.

The State and non-state forces have also been responsible in controlling the local media by giving threats and orders as to what is to be published for the public. As a result, the media itself has not been able to fulfil the vision of what it aims to, to give voice of the subjugated and the oppressed and also to enlighten the citizens of what is happening. Like the Indian State and its people, the mainstream Indian media has also not

been bothered by what is happening in the Northeast region in their decades of armed conflict. It seems to have acted along with the Indian State in leaving out the region from letting other Indians and the world know as to what is really happening. The only time that we have witnessed a national media present 24 hours in Manipur was not to cover the real issues of the people, but to report the Olympic journey of Mary Kom when she reached the semi-finals in women's boxing in 2012 Olympics. The people from the region who have been ignored for decades as citizens of India, suddenly came to limelight in the wake of Mary Kom who was already guaranteed a medal in Olympics. What an irony.

To a significant extent, the insurgency problem in the Northeast is a response to the Indian state policies. And if policy makers and leaders are to continue relying on the state-centric literature and reports, the real issues will never be understood, and the state policy makers will continue to fail in their approach. Women organizations in Manipur, while not denying the State and non-state actors responsible for the Violence against Women, in most cases, have been more vocal on the VAW meted out by the Indian armed forces. They are also equally vocal if a non-state armed group of other community commits any form of VAW to one's own community. But not vice-versa. There is a lot of politics being played upon VAW based on community rivalry and difference. As discussed in chapter women who were sexually violated by the Non-state armed groups, many civil and human rights groups remained silent, including the media. The interest of one's community is considered the priority, and other issues including VAW are considered as secondary and as expendables at certain times.

This has been the picture of women's movement against VAW in Manipur. Both at the ethnic community level to the larger women's community as a whole in the state, women's fight against VAW does not seem to be heading in the right direction. There is little or no coordination and support for fight against violence against women among women of Manipur and their organizations. There is also a failure on the part of women to speak out against their own community's non-state armed groups for VAW. This is also largely based on the fear factor. Women leaders would have a second thought in coming forward and leading the protest against VAW. The scope for raising their voice in the fight for justice is very limited as they are also scared for their lives. Such is the environment in which human rights organizations and other civil societies function, as much is controlled either by the state and the non-state armed groups.

Two crucial aspects of this thesis which could be worth pondering upon seriously by future researchers and the present academics alike could be the following two. Firstly, the need of a drastic change towards how the Indian state perceives the issue of insurgency in the state and secondly how to tackle it. There is a need to address the Indo-Naga armed conflict with sincerity and genuinely so that a solution can be reached. And for this, the political, social, and historical nature of the demands and the context of the Nagas must be understood rather than the use of military means. The Indo-Naga conflict is a clear example which shows that forceful military strategies can never resolve any political issue. As long as conflict continues, the civilians, particularly women and children will be the ones who will be affected the most.

It is widely considered among the Nagas that taking up arms to fight against the oppressive Indian State is as equally important as any other form of non-violent struggle.

While armed struggle of the Nagas is largely considered to be seen as an open fight against oppression, colonization, and injustice, the way the struggle is organized; it does not liberate or empower women, but rather it strengthens its control over women in patriarchal norms in every sphere of social, political and economic.

Conflict also provided a space for women to be active citizens, but their issues are suppressed or kept aside in order to attend to other issues which they felt were more urgent to tackle. The Naga women do not think or speak much for themselves, but they seem to be more concerned about the bigger issue which they think is National or the Naga issue of right to self-determination. Most Naga women believe that everything will come to place once the Naga-Indo armed conflict is settled politically. But I strongly propagate that their rights will not be just given no matter what the situation is, be it in times peace or armed conflict. It is something which they should fight for along with men and it should not be compromised.

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The following is the list of the people interviewed formally after taking appointment during the research. And an equal number of people were interviewed in a non-formal environment where they told me many stories or where we engaged in lengthy discussions.

(All names are changed)

Sl. No.	Name	Age	Place	Date and Year
1	S1	62	Ukhrul	Oct 14, 2013
2	S2	37	Ukhrul	Oct 5, 2013
3	S3	30	Ukhrul	Oct 5, 2013
4	S4	27	Ukhrul	Oct 5, 2013
5	S5	21	Ukhrul	Oct 5, 2013
6	S6	17	Chandel	Feb10,2013
7	S7	12	Chandel	Feb10,2013
8	S8	16	Chandel	Feb10,2013
9	S9	18	Chandel	Feb10,2013
10	S10	17	Chandel	Feb10,2013
11	S11	19	Chandel	Feb10,2013
12	S12	16	Chandel	Feb10,2013
13	S13	16	Chandel	Feb10,2013
14	S14	50	Ukhrul	march 21, 2014
15	S15	60	Senapati	Jan 23, 2014
16	S16	31	Mao Gate	March 13, 2013
17	S17	30	Mao Gate	March 13, 2013
18	S18	55	Mao Gate	March 14, 2013
19	S19	60	Ukhrul	Aug 05, 2014
20	S20	55	Ukhrul	Aug 05, 2014
21	S21		Lt. Col(HYD)	July 21, 2018
22	S22		Col. (Rtd)	July 26, 2018
23	S23	65	Mao Gate	march 13, 2013
24	S24	45	Mao Gate	march 9, 2013
25	S25	47	Mao Gate	march 7, 2013
26	S26	50	Mao Gate	March 5, 2013
27	S27	35	Mao Gate	march 12, 2013
28	S28	45	Mao Gate	march 12, 2013
29	S29	29	Mao Gate	march 32, 2013
30	S30	53	Mao Gate	march 23, 2013
31	S31	24	Mao Gate	march 23, 201
32	S32	33	Mao Gate	March 14, 2013
33	S33	37	Ukhrul	April 21, 2015
34	S34	75	Ukhrul	May 10, 2015
35	S35	40	Ukhrul	May 12,2015
36	S36	56	Ukhrul	Oct 17, 2013
37	S37	50	Ukhrul	Nov 09, 2014
38	S38		Manipur police,Ukhrul	Nov 09, 2014
39	S39	50	Ukhrul	Dec 10, 2018
40	S40	70	Ukhrul	Oct 15, 2015
41	S41	35	Imphal	Jan. 10, 2014

42	S42	28	Imphal	Jan. 10, 2014
43	S43	80	Imphal	Jan 07, 2009
44	S44	16	Senapati	April 27, 2014
45	S45		NSCN(IM)Senapati	Dec 19, 2018
46	S46	45	Chandel	Jan 31, 2015
47	S47	38	Chandel	Jan 31, 2015
49	S49	40	Ukhrul	Dec 05, 2013
50	S50	30	Chandel	Aug 10, 2014
51	S51	25	Chandel	Aug 10, 2014
52	S52	23	Chandel	Aug 10, 2014
53	S53	70	Ukhrul	Nov 06,2015
54	S54	41	Chandel	Feb 09,2015
55	S55	35	Chandel	Feb 04,2015
56	S56	43	Tamenglong	Dec 11, 2015
57	S57	35	Ukhrul	March 10,2014
58	S58	31	Ukhrul	Dec 04, 2013
59	S59	24	Imphal	Dec 7, 2014
60	S60	48	Tamenglong	March 08, 2014
61	S61	31	Mao Gate/Senapati	July 17, 2012
62	S62	55	Senapati	July 16, 2012
63	S63	67	Tamenglong	April 12, 2014
64	S64	44	Ukhrul	Dec 17, 2013
65	S65	25	Ukhrul	June 10, 2017
66	S66		Ukhrul	June 10, 2017
67	S67	62	Tamenglong	April 14, 2014
68	S68	41	Ukhrul	June 12, 2015
69	S69	47	Ukhrul	Dec 15, 2017
70	S70	24	Ukhrul	June 14, 2015
71	S71	51	Imphal	Dec 10, 2016
72	S72	23	Ukhrul	Dec 02, 2013
73	S73	34	Ukhrul	Dec 01, 2013
74	S74		Manipur police	Nov 10, 2014
75	S75	43	Mao gate	

Organizations interviewed:

1. Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network
2. Naga People's Movement for Human Rights
3. Naga Women's Union Manipur
4. TangkhulKatamnao Long (Nagaram)
5. Song Song Village Authorities
6. Shingkap Village Authorities
7. Shirui Village Authorities

NAGA HILLS MEMORANDUM TO SIMON COMMISSION, 1929

Dated, 10 January, 1929

The British Statutory Commission; Camp-India

Subs: Memorandum of the Naga Hills

Sir,

WE the Undersigned Nagas of the Naga Club at Kohima, who are the only persons at present who can voice for our people have heard with great regret that our Naga Hills is included in the Reformed Scheme of India without our knowledge, but as administrator of our Hills is continued to be in the hands of the British Officers and we did not consider it necessary to raise any protest in the past. Now we learnt that you have come to India as representative of the British Government to enquire into the working of the system of Government and the growth of education and we beg to submit below our view with prayer that our Hills may be withdrawn from the Reformed Scheme and placed outside the Reforms but directly under British Government. We never asked for any reforms and we do not wish for any reforms.

Before the British Government conquered our country in 1879-80, we were living in a state of intermitted warfare with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South. They never conquered us nor were we subjected to their rules. On the other hand, we were always a terror to these people. Our country within the administered area consists of more than eight regions quite different from one another, with quite different languages which cannot be understood by each other, and there are more regions outside the administered area which are not known at present. We have no unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together now.

Our education is poor. The occupation of our country by the British Government being so recent as 1880, we have had no chance or opportunity to improve in education and though we can boast of two three graduates of an Indian University in our country, we have not got one yet who is able to represent all our different regions or master our languages much less one to represent us in any council of a province. Moreover, our population numbering 1,02,000 is very small in comparison with the population of the plain district in the province; and any representation that may be allotted to us in the council will be negligible and will have no weight whatever. Our language is quite different from those of the plains and we have no social affinities with the

Hindus or Mussalmans. We are look down upon by the one for “beef” and the other for our “pork” and by both for our want in education, is not due to any fault of ours.

Our country is poor and it does not pay for any administration. Therefore if it is continued to be placed under Reformed Scheme, we are afraid new and heavy taxes will have to be imposed on us, and when we cannot pay, then all lands have to be sold and in long run we shall have no share in the land of our birth and life will not be worth living then. Though our land at present is within the British territory, Government have always recognized our private rights in it, but if we are forced to enter the council the majority of whose number is sure to belong to other districts, we also have much fear the introduction of foreign laws and customs to supersede our own customary laws which we now enjoy.

For the above reasons, we pray that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachment from other people who are more advanced than us by withdrawing our country that we should not be thrust to the mercy of other people who could never be subjected; but to leave us alone to determine ourselves as in ancient times. We claim not only the members of “Naga Club” to represent all those regions to which we belong viz, Angamis, Kacha Nagas, Kukis, Semas, Lothas and Rengmas, but also other regions of Nagaland.

Signed by

- (1) Nihu Angami, Head Interpreter,
- (2) Hisale Peshkar,
- (3) Nisier Angami, Master,
- (4) Khosa Doctor,
- (5) Gebo Kacha Nagas, Interpreter,
- (6) Vipunyu Angami, Potdar
- (7) Goyiepra Angami, Treasurer,
- (8) Ruzhukhrie Angami, Master,
- (9) Dikhrie Angami, Sub-overseer,
- (10) Zapuzhulie Angami, Master,
- (11) Zapulie Angami, Interpreter,
- (12) Katsuno Angami, Interpreter,
- (13) Nuolhoukielie Angami, Interpreter,
- (14) Inzevi Sema, Interpreter,
- (15) Apamo Lotha, Interpreter,
- (16) Resile Rengma, Interpreter,
- (17) Lengjang Kuki, Interpreter,
- (18) Neikhriehu Angami, Interpreter,
- (19) Miakrao Angami, Chaprasi,
- (20) Levi Kacha Naga, Clerk.

Appendix A- 2 (Luingamla Kashan)



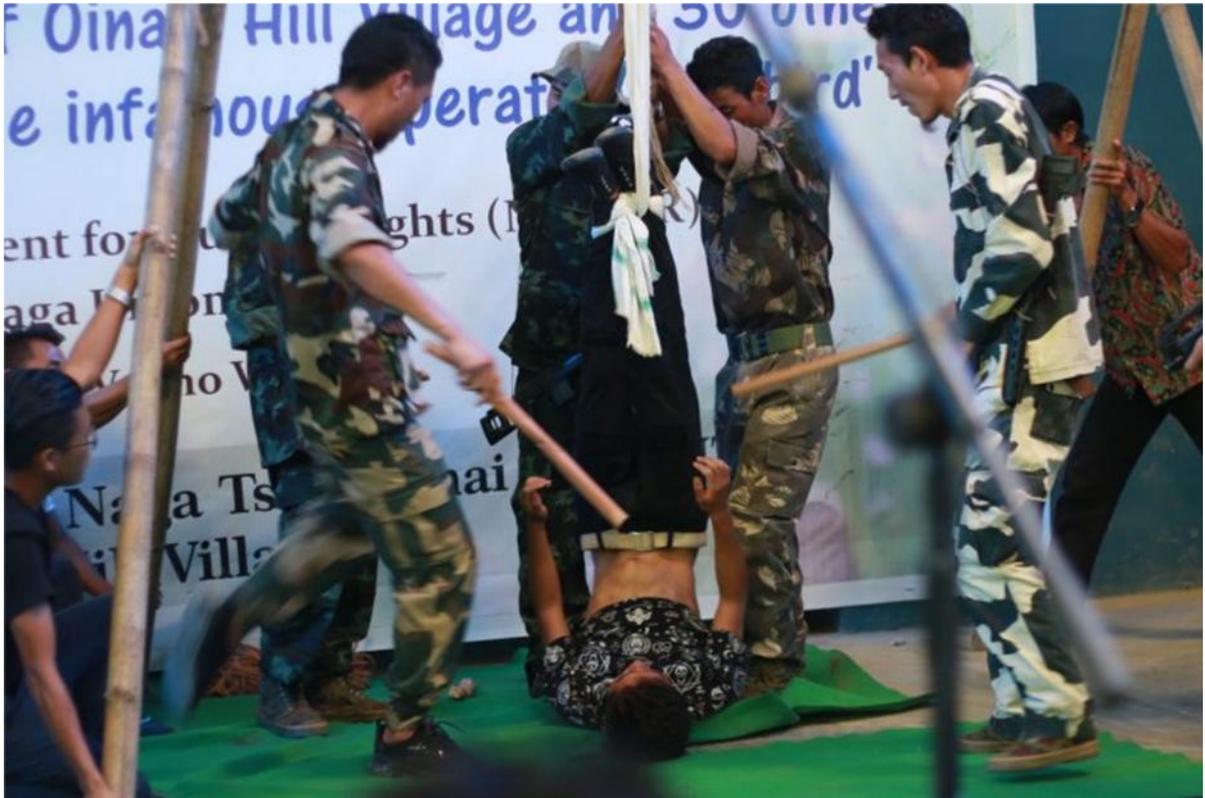
Appendix A -3 : The Naked Protest (Source: Outlook Feb. 10, 2016)



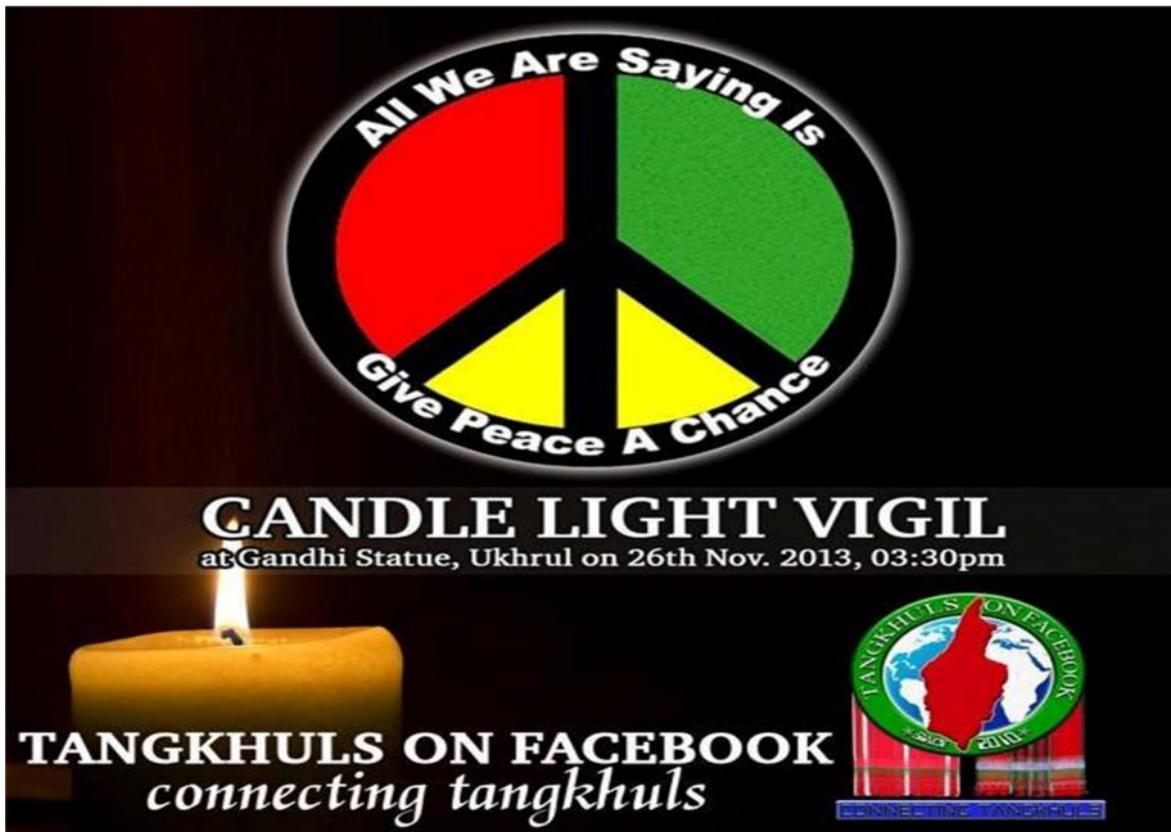
Appendix A-4 (Source: Tehelka Magazine)



Appendix A-5: A Play on 'Operation Bluebird' (Source: Thenagarepublic.com)



Appendix A- 6: (Source: Tangkhul on Facebook, November 25, 2013)



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State Violence against Women in Conflict Zones: A Study of Manipur

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Abstract: According to some studies, one sixth of India's population live in areas affected with armed conflict. There are the secessionist movements in the Northeast and Kashmir, and the Maoist movements in several regions of India. The Indian government denies that there are any armed conflicts in India (GOI, 2007), and uses phrases like 'disturbed areas', 'insurgency infested', 'law and order problems'. Armed conflict in Manipur is a result of the contestation between the Indian state's forces and the insurgency / non-state armed groups over the question of ethno-nationalism/self-determination, which has a historical setting. The response of the Indian government has been the perpetual reliance on military methods, counter insurgency and enactment of anti-people laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958. This paper attempts to look at how women in the state of Manipur are subjected to violence by the state forces, conveniently with impunity.

Key words: Armed Conflict, Violence against Women, Armed Forces

Introduction

India is a highly militarized state. Its total national armed force, with around 1.1 million personnel, is the third largest in the world. Its air force is the world's fourth largest (Cockburn, Cynthia). Internally the army is deployed against insurgency in two peripheral areas, Kashmir in the north and the cluster of small states in Northeast India. According to Gautam Navlakha, India's armed forces remain the busiest 'peacetime' army fighting internal wars... More than one-third of the army is engaged in counter insurgency.... If paramilitary forces are added to this, no less than 50 percent of the security force is deployed against... people (Kazi, 2010, p. 9). The irony is that Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, was first imposed ostensibly to secure territories that were not fully integrated into the India union; to bind the not-India that lay at India's peripheries into the Indian geo-national imaginary. But after the act being applied for more than half a century and with an ever increasing scope, the AFSPA has only confirmed the raptures between what is and what is not India (Kazi, 2010, p. 38).

Under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, a large number of police and security forces have been deployed in Manipur. The government does not provide figures of the forces deployed in insurgency infested regions so analyst can only make estimates. It is estimated that the state has over 14,000 police and at least 50,000 military and paramilitaries being deployed in Manipur (Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 22) where the population stands at 2.2 million. Indian armed forces include the army, the central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force, the Assam Rifles, and the Indian Reserve Battalions. And for this study,

Manipur state police forces are also taken into account. The paper attempts to argue that in such a situation of heavy militarization, women and ordinary civilians are caught in between the state and non-state armed forces. Physical and sexual violence against women during conflict is not a new phenomenon. Violence affects women and men, however this article tries to argue that women are more likely to be subjected to violence, particularly sexual violence. The source for the article includes both primary and secondary.

Violence against Women

Violence against women takes many forms. The 1993 United Nation Declaration of the Elimination of violence Against Women was the first to arrive at an internationally agreed upon definition of violence as it pertains to women's experiences. Violence was defined as 'any act that results in or likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats or such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life' (Johnson, Holly et al, 2008). Physical and sexual violence, particularly against women, continues to be a well-documented feature of conflict in Manipur as they Indian security personnel enjoy impunity guaranteed by the AFSPA.

In many nationalist discourses the nation is depicted as the 'motherland'. The language of nationalism is itself gendered and the image of the nation is often linked to the 'mother' or 'mother goddess'. Women become identified with the nation and their bodies used to reproduce the boundaries of the nation and as transmitter of national culture. Since women are identified as territory and linked with the 'honor' and control of

this territory, rape has always been part of the act of war and conflict. Here the aggressor by violating the honor of the enemy, the act is symbolized as violating the community honor of the 'other' – enemy (Chenoy, 2002, p. 63). And it is through the use of this symbolism that women are being raped by soldiers in conflict regions like Manipur.

According to Paula Banerjee, the impact of border laws (such as AFSPA, 1958) on people in North East India is often considered from a male perspective. There is little realization that these laws have a different impact on women. The women of the region are often portrayed by the coercive machinery of the state as not merely deviant, but their sexuality itself is considered threatening, rendering the impact of these laws on women even more violent (Banerjee, 2008, p. 258). Women are more prone to violence from the Indian army, as most of them hail from other mainland states of India which are considered to be more patriarchal. The first reported rape case in Manipur by the military was that of Miss Rose, a Tangkhul girl of Ngaprum village, Ukhrul district, who was gang raped for hours on the night of 4th March 1974 by Border Security Forces (Combat Law, Vol. 2, Issue 1). She wrote a suicide note to her fiancé with whom she was to be married (Morung Express). After the incident she was rejected by her lover, family and community due to the deeply rooted patriarchal and cultural notion of the Tangkhul Nagas, considering her to be no longer pure and clean. Rose committed suicide two days later out of shame and rejection while the perpetrators went scot-free, due to lack of sufficient evidence. Women occupy a very different position in the Tangkhul Naga society as compared to men, and so they are treated differently. Women who are raped are frequently shunned, ostracized, and considered unmarriageable or spoiled. This is where the issues of rehabilitation and counseling survivors of violence in conflict zones come into being. Even today, there is little or no mechanism of support system to deal with survivors of sexual violence, and this needs to be seriously looked into.

Violence and torture against civilians, particularly against women, is another consequence of the power and privileges enjoyed by security forces in Manipur. Countless incidents of physical and sexual violence go unreported and uninvestigated due to fear of social stigma. Only a few cases were ever filed and even in these cases women did not get justice. On 10 July 2004, members of the 17th Assam Rifles arrested Thangjam Manorama as a suspected member of People's Liberation Army (PLA) at her residence in Bamon Kampu. An arrest memo was given to her family at the time. The next day her dead body was found a few kilometers from her residence. There were gunshot wounds on her genitals. An autopsy revealed semen marks on her skirts, suggesting rape and murder (Sangai Express). Justice Upendra Singh who headed the Commission to look into the case found the

security men guilty (NDTV). But the Assam Rifles had challenged the validity of the commission arguing that they are governed under a special act and only the centre can set up a commission of inquiry and not the state (NDTV). Like any other case, justice for Thangjam Manorama is still awaited.

The extraordinary repression gives rise to extraordinary response. It was in July 15, a dozen of elderly *Meitei* women marched to the area headquarters of the Assam Rifles, stripped naked and waved banners which read, "Indian Army Rape US", "Indian Army Take Our Flesh". The naked protest made it into the headlines and portrayed to the world the atrocities committed by the Indian state with the use of its military forces; backed by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Section 4, of the AFSPA, 1958 gives the commissioned officer, warrant officer, or non-commissioned officer, the power to shoot to kill any person who is acting in contravention of any law and order. And section 6, establishes that no legal proceeding can be brought against any member of the armed forces under the AFSPA, without the permission of the Central Government. This section leaves the victims of the armed forces abuses without a remedy (South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre).

A recent incident of crime against women which came under strong criticism was the gang rape of Jangthailiu Kamei (age 40 yrs), a U-morok (King Chilly) trader from Nungleiband village of Tamenglong, at Meijrao (Bishnupur) by four persons, of whom two are Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) personnel. The woman is a mother of four. The incident happened on the night of March 21, 2012. When the victim along with her brother-in-law were on his truck to sell U – Morok (king chilli) at Imphal, they were suddenly stopped by four persons travelling in a car. They assaulted her brother-in-law on the pretext that he had not registered the vehicle at the forest check post. At gun point they abducted her to a nearby field and gang raped her. They threatened to shoot her dead while she screamed for help. She was later found in an unconscious state. Apart from the physical and sexual violence, the perpetrators took away their cell phones, a sum of Rs 6,500 and about 40 kgs of their chilli. She pleaded to them to have mercy on her saying she is a mother of four. While filing for a complaint in the police station she mentioned that she overheard one of the culprits calling 'Sir Tiken' on the cell phone and this was used as a big clue in demanding a thorough probe into the case. And also taking note of the insistent demand by various civil societies, the police apprehended the perpetrators along with the confiscated goods and money. While she went to identify the culprits in the police station, to her surprise and anger she was offered money to keep silent about the incident. But instead she demanded for capital punishment. Being a poor woman doesn't mean that she can sell

her dignity after what they had done to her by committing the most heinous crime. She is a mother of two girls and two boys. She was on her way to sell king chilli so that she could use the money to pay their school fees.

In a conflict area, spaces, especially that of women become restricted and their mobility is severely hampered. For example, women, particularly in the hilly regions of Manipur are unable to work long hours in their fields and are compelled to go in groups or accompanied by men for fear of assault from armed security personnel. Fewer hours in the fields mean that food security gets affected (Gill, 2010, p. 9) as women contribute equally or more than men in a household economy. Not only are women raped by the security and police forces, but they are also targeted for raising their voices against injustice. A mass rally was organized by the Joint Action Committees constituted against the rape of Kamei and murder of one Keisham Premila in collaboration with several civil society organizations. But the peaceful women protesters were made the targets of Thoubal District Police, where the rally was blocked by the police leading to intense scuffle between the two sides. The police in their efforts to drive back the protesters fired several rounds of tear gas shells and mock bombs causing serious injuries to six women (Sangai Express).

Cases of physical violence are very common in conflict regions like Manipur. Mrs. X (37 yrs) along with three of her male friends was picked up for no reason by the state police commandos in plain clothes while they were collecting pig feed in Imphal. They were blindfolded, driven around, beaten and tortured by the police personnel who were all male. She was then handed over to the East Imphal police station, where she was again beaten and tortured by three police women. It was in the police station that she was falsely branded as a National Socialist Council Nagaland (Isack-Muivah) cadre who was trying to plant bombs in the town, and passed remarks like "these days women are more dangerous than men." She was interrogated and when she replied saying that she is a mother of eight children and the youngest is just five months old, they tortured her more saying that she was lying. "They beat me on my hands, lower limbs and buttock until I lost my consciousness. I was taken to court and released the next day. Doctor advised me to go for x rays and other health check up caused by the torture but I could not go due to financial problems. I was bedridden for more than two weeks and during which I could not even hold my son nor was I able to properly breast feed him. I felt so sorry for him." The incident gives us a clear picture as to how violence against women affects not only the individual, but the entire family. Firstly, as a mother she could not take care of her child and her own needs. For example, women require additional nutrition and health care if they are pregnant or lactating (UN

2002). Secondly, there was a loss of two hands in the family, considering that tribal women contribute equally or more than a man in their family subsistence apart from handling the daily chores such as fetching water and woods, taking care of the children etc. Food scarcity and unequal distribution of food items are also said to be exacerbated during periods of conflicts, rendering women and girls more susceptible to malnutrition (UN 2002). In conflict zones women are stereotyped as just mothers, wives, survivors and victims, while men are portrayed as aggressors and soldiers. But the above incident involving the police women clearly shows that women are also active perpetrators of violence.

Patterns of violence against women in conflict areas do not arise naturally, but are ordered, condoned or tolerated based on political calculations. Furthermore, these crimes are committed by the state armed forces as they know that they will not be punished for committing crimes against women. And since the perpetrators enjoy impunity, many women victims choose not to report cases of sexual violence. Many women hide or deny abuse for fear of social stigma, or because their coping mechanism may dispose them not to publicize for the abuse they have suffered. Social stigma is greatly increased by the failure of the states to prevent and prosecute sexualized violence, leading women to feel doubly victimized in their attempt to seek justice. Women also have particular healthcare needs as a result of these violations.

Conclusion

There is an immediate need to address the armed conflict in Manipur. For this purpose the political, social and historical nature of the demands and the contexts in which they are embedded must be understood, and it means the need of a serious dialogue for solution rather than military force. Only then that security forces will operate entirely within the framework of law. Nowhere is the rule of law established by allowing law enforcement agencies to work with impunity. Ordinary citizens, particularly women, having seen and experienced so much violence inflicted on them by the state forces, have even failed to recognize the kinds of violence to which they have been subjected, it has become so normal to them. Women continue to be at the receiving end of both conflict and patriarchal dominance. And hence to tackle violence against women it requires change in values, attitudes and behavioral norms, especially of men. Armed conflict negatively affects women and men and results in gender-specific disadvantages, particularly for women who are not always recognized or addressed by the mainstream, gender-blind understandings of conflict and reconstruction. And since these conflicts are not part of the Indian growth story, the communities affected by them are not visible, upper caste elite

and their stories and voices are not part of the mainstream discourse.(Chenoy et al, 2010, p. 30). AFSPA, which was instituted by the Government of India (GOI) has today become a

symbol of state repression in the state of Manipur, and this was declared by none other than Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee. (GOI)

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by M Yurreisem

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