

**ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF  
INSURGENCY IN VALLEY AREAS OF MANIPUR**

**Research Report**

**Submitted to**

**BUREAU OF POLICE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**  
Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

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## PREFACE

Conflict is as much a part of human civilisation as peace is. However, there are phases in human history when conflict takes precedence over peace due to its magnitude in terms of duration, actors, scale and impact. Presently, human civilisation is passing through such a phase as one sees devastating rise of regional, sub-national, religious and ethnic forces that try to achieve their goals and objectives through violence, intimidation, extortion and such other acts which are not only illegal but also contrary to the principles of rights, justice and freedom.

Insurgency in the State of Manipur is one such conflict that sees no movement towards resolution making it independent India's one of the oldest conflicts. With three major ethnic groups in the State, its insurgency is also primarily divided into insurgent groups of Meitei (in the valley), Naga and Kuki (in the hills). The problems of insurgency in the valley and in hills are quite different in view of their objectives and geo-political conditions. While the Meiteis' prime objective is to free their pre-British territorial boundary from "Indian occupation", the Naga insurgents support the demand of sovereign 'Nagalim' (Greater Nagaland) and the Kukis, on the other hand, support the demand of separate Kukiiland.

It is well known that women suffer disproportionately in conflicts and wars. Although most combatants in a conflict situation are men, women civilians are more likely to be killed in the process. Moreover, sexual violence is also used as a weapon of war and conflict throughout the history. As the women are the worst sufferers, it is logical to seek their active participation in conflict resolution. In view of the above dynamics, it was decided during in-house deliberations of HDS that the role of women in conflict management should be studied in only one of the two regions of the State. Based on preliminary reading and discussions with experts, the decision to cover the valley region was taken. Accordingly, a proposal titled "Role of Women in Conflict Management: A Study of Insurgency in Valley Areas of Manipur" was submitted to the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), Government of India. The sanction of BPR&D provided opportunity to work on this challenging project.

Data for the research have been collected from four valley districts of Manipur viz. Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal through interviews of women and members of women's organisations, field observation and internet and library research. Researchers of Human Development Society (HDS) visited rural and urban areas for data collection. Findings of the research have been chapterised keeping in mind the objectives of the study.

HDS is very thankful to the BPR&D for providing financial support for the project. Our sincere appreciation goes to officers of BPR&D namely Shri R. C. Arora, Director (R&D) and Dr. Tapan Chakraborty, Assistant Director (Research) for facilitating execution of the project. The organisation is also thankful to the officers of Manipur government and central police organisations as also academicians for extending full support during collection of field data and material for study.

The organisation acknowledges with gratitude the contributions of the NGOs and researchers who collected data, the women who shared their views and the professionals who helped in data analysis, tabulation etc.

HDS sincerely hopes that the study would contribute to the process of conflict management in the State of Manipur.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manipur is a strategically located northeastern State. It, though geographically and culturally a part of India, was an independent nation-state under Meitei monarchy. It became politically a part of India on being defeated in Anglo-Manipur war of 1891 when British made it a native Indian State in 1892. It was merged with India on 21 September 1949. On integration with India, it first became a part C State, then a Union Territory and finally a State on 21 January 1972.

It has two distinct geographical regions, namely, valley and the hills surrounding the valley. Total area of the State is 22327 square kilometers. Hills are inhabited by 29 tribal communities- 13 Naga and 16 non-Naga. All of them are Christians. Meitei Hindus are predominant among the mosaic population of the valley. Total population of the State is 2,293,896 (2001 census). Around 60 per cent population of Manipur resides in the valley which comprises 10.02 per cent area of the State. Agriculture, pisciculture and weaving are backbone of economy of both the regions. The entire State is economically backward.

Manipur has been acclaimed all over the world for its unique culture, martial art, scintillating dances, excellent sports persons and thrilling indigenous sports. At the same time, this birth place of polo is also a home to various problems: unemployment, insurgency movements, rampant corruption, drug abuse, AIDS, political instability, ethnic unrest and threat to its territorial integrity. Of them, insurgency in the valley is the most disastrous.

With a view to understanding the role that women can play in resolution of the problem of insurgency, a study titled “**Role of Women in Conflict Management: A Study of Insurgency in Valley Areas of Manipur**”, as sponsored by BPR&D, has been undertaken.

### Objectives

- ❖ Give a gender perspective to the insurgency and conflict resolution process.
- ❖ Discuss the impact of insurgency in day-to-day lives of women in Manipur valley.
- ❖ Discuss the role of women in conflict management and resolution.
- ❖ Suggest measures to make the role of women’s movement and associations more effective in handling insurgency-related problems.

### Methodology

The study covered all the four districts of Manipur valley viz. Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal. The respondents for the interviews were selected randomly from all the four districts. Methods for data collection included interview of 385 women in the valley; library and internet research; case studies; observations of field researchers; and interaction with scholars, security, administrative officials and social activists. Quantitative data were coded and analysed by using SPSS software. Qualitative data, on the other hand, contributed to analysis of different components of the report.

## Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

- ❖ Women's role in conflict resolution has not been given due recognition and importance. Their energy, eagerness and wisdom have not been properly harnessed to curb insurgency in Manipur. *The study has affirmed this hypothesis.*
- ❖ Women bring different perspective than the prevailing majoritarian view on security and insurgency related issues. *Women do bring different perspective.*
- ❖ The voices of the women can be mainstreamed in conflict management and resolution. Their skills and experience will be valuable to solve the insurgency problem. *This hypothesis appears correct.*

## Manipur and its Insurgency Problem

Whole of Manipur is afflicted by insurgency movements. Hills are affected by Naga and Kuki-Zomi insurgent groups. Because of various ceasefire pacts, hills are at present more or less peaceful.

Continued high intensity violence by Meitei insurgent groups in Manipur valley is a matter of concern. They often commit depredation in hill areas also. These outfits have women cadres and child warriors. Besides them, numerous armed groups of criminals, smugglers, extortionists, drug paddlers and kidnappers for ransom masquerade as insurgents. Hankering for power, authority and wrongful gain are at the root of this multiplicity. This multiplicity of groups/ gangs is a dreadful manifestation of gun culture in Manipur valley and a serious hindrance for peace process in the valley.

The genesis of insurgency is embedded in the history of Manipur. Several causes are responsible for insurgency in the valley. They include perceived wrongs and feeling of hurt of Meitei people over a long period at the hands of authorities of central government, unemployment, economic deprivation, poor governance, corruption, extortion, foreign support and fear of Meitei people of balkanization of the State for meeting aspirations of Nagas of Manipur to be a part of *Nagalim* (Greater Nagaland) consisting of Nagaland and Naga inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya. The primary objective of Meitei insurgent groups is to free Manipur from Indian occupation.

A two-pronged strategy has been adopted in Manipur for tackling insurgency in valley areas, namely, use of security forces for containing militancy and taking of political and developmental measures for addressing issues that have created, promoted and sustained insurgency. For settlement of these issues, the Government of India is open to talks within the framework of the Constitution of India with any group that abjures violence. No serious effort to bring about negotiated peace in Manipur valley, however, has been made. Counter insurgency measures launched by the government have not yielded the desired effect.

## Status of Meitei Women

It is widely believed in India that Meitei women are liberated and advanced and enjoy status equal to their male counterparts. This impression is highly exaggerated. At the same time, it is true that there is certainly no excessive male domination. Meitei women enjoy high social

standing. They have proved that women power has enough punch to bring the stiffest opposition down on its knees. They have rendered yeoman's service in social sphere, exposing human rights violations, fighting drug abuse and creating awareness about HIV/AIDS. Their contribution in economic sphere is laudable. Undoubtedly, Meitei women have vast potential for public good.

### **Gender Perspective**

- ❖ Women's awareness of insurgency is very high (91 percent), which is indicative of all pervasiveness of the problem in valley.
- ❖ Most important reasons of insurgency, in the opinion of women, are underdevelopment, unemployment & economic disparities (53 percent), and greed and lack of morality in the society (30 percent).
- ❖ According to them, the principal steps taken by government to resolve insurgency are police, administrative & armed measures, programmes for rural development and employment generation. According to women and field investigators, armed measures are more visible than other measures.
- ❖ Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), women organisations and individuals in Manipur valley take initiatives from time to time for mobilisation of people for building a mass movement for peace. These initiatives include awareness and advocacy campaigns such as *dharnas*, public meetings and rallies. Fifty seven percent women are aware of steps being taken by NGOs etc. for peace building.
- ❖ The women contend that individuals and NGOs should do a lot more to restore peace as out of those who know the activities of individuals and constituents of civil society, 65 per cent felt that the activities are not adequate in light of the present situation.
- ❖ The women feel that the government has to undertake, besides the present activities, many additional steps to resolve insurgency including rapid industrial development and inculcation of moral values and elimination of corruption in the society.

### **Impact of Insurgency**

Because of insurgency, administration has collapsed, development activities have been dislocated, corruption has become rampant and people have been impoverished. Funds for development are systematically and at a large scale siphoned off by coalitions of corrupt politicians, dishonest bureaucrats, unscrupulous contractors and local insurgent groups, leaving little for investment both in hill and valley areas.

Women are worst affected due to insurgency as 84 percent of the women interviewed alleged that they have suffered in one or the other way due to insurgency. In this connection, a social activist and leader of an NGO says, "The prevailing situation forces them to earn money by selling vegetables and even by selling their bodies to support their children. Women of Manipur are still facing/ struggling with the challenges at their level as best as they can, without any proper support from the government."

### **Women in Conflict Management**

- Women organizations and other civil society groups undertake from time to time activities such as peace marches, *dharnas* etc. for bringing peace in the valley.

- They also agitate against human rights violations by security forces (state actors) and insurgent groups (non-state actors).
- No women organisation or any other civil society group can impose a settlement on insurgent groups and state authorities.
- But, as experience of Mizoram and Nagaland shows, women organisations and other civil society components collectively can build a mass movement for peace and persuade insurgent groups and government to cease-fire and take up negotiations in a congenial environment. They can also be of great help in overcoming deadlocks that such negotiations encounter. In this connection, Sajal Nag (2006) remarks that studies reveal, “In an otherwise doomed situation in India, the women in northeast India have been playing an important role, that of peace makers, to bring order in their conflict ridden societies. It was peace making not between families or clans or tribes but underground insurgents, called national workers, and the government of India. It was not only unique but also unparalleled in entire South Asia.”

## **Recommendations**

### *Advocacy and Awareness Programmes*

**Need for Concerted Action:** Opinion makers of all sections, including women, should actively work in concert for building and sustaining a mass movement for peace in the Manipur valley.

**Women’s Empowerment:** Women groups, when suitably empowered, can play a significant role in creating a mass movement for peace in the valley. To empower them, the government, political establishment and different civil society groups should provide them financial support, involve them in consultation process, give them representation in decision making positions, and associate them with schemes for employment generation, social change and rehabilitation.

### *Administrative Measures*

**Drive against corruption:** Both by government and people.

**Better Coordination with Foreign Countries:** To stop assistance to the Indian insurgent groups, uproot camps of insurgents on their soil, deny the insurgents space for launching operations in India and share intelligence about their activities.

**Better Inter-State Police Networking:** To deny insurgents safe houses at places like Guwahati, Shillong, Coimbatore and Delhi.

**Police Primacy in Counter-insurgency:** Giving primacy to State police after necessary reorganisation and strengthening, as it being local, has several advantages for operational work and does not need special laws like AFSPA for it has necessary powers under ordinary law of land.

**Women’s Involvement in Peace Process:** Government should make women’s organisations and organizations that are working on women’s issues a part of every peace effort in order to make the process representative of different views.

**Recognition to Women and Other Organisations:** Individuals and organizations that devote themselves for the cause of peace should be given recognition at the state and national level.

*Confidence Building Measures*

**Preservation of Meitei Interests:** The central government should assure Meitei people, both through categorical policy pronouncements and firm deeds, that it values their legitimate aspirations and shall not balkanise/ damage their interests to appease other nationalities and they need not harbour insurgent groups for defending their heritage, rights and interests.

**Withdrawal of Unpopular Measures:** Unpopular law and order measures like AFSPA should be withdrawn.

*Economic Measures*

**Trade and Commerce:** Out of box measures such as facilities for trade with neighbouring countries are necessary for addressing the problems of unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities and backwardness of Manipur.

**Productivity and Industry:** Manipur valley has a sizable potential for improving productivity of its agriculture, pisciculture and growing horticulture crops, as also for improvement of tsar industry, setting up of food processing industry, readymade garments and electronic/electric goods assembly factories. Upgradation of technology can give a substantial boost to the traditional handloom industry. Tourism is another sector that can give fillip to the economy.

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## Chapter 1

# THE STUDY

### 1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to:

- ❖ Discuss the role of women in conflict management and resolution. The main focus of analysis will be the *Meira Paibi*, other women-centred NGOs and associations.
- ❖ Give a gender perspective to the insurgency and conflict resolution process. In other words, the study aims to expand the contours of security debate by making it beyond a military or state-centric preoccupation.
- ❖ Discuss the impact of insurgency in the day-to-day lives of women in Manipur valley. The study will analyse the extent to which their lives are dislocated and their survival is threatened by this problem.
- ❖ To suggest measures to make the role of women's movement and associations more effective in handling insurgency-related problems. In other words, it will stress on the capacity building and skill enhancement of women's organisations to undertake more challenging and effective tasks in conflict management and resolution.

### 2. HYPOTHESES

The study tested the following hypotheses:

- ❖ Women's role in conflict resolution has not been given due recognition and importance. Their energy, eagerness and wisdom have not been properly harnessed to curb insurgency in Manipur.
- ❖ Women bring different perspective than the prevailing majoritarian view on security and insurgency related issues.
- ❖ The voices of the women can be mainstreamed in conflict management and resolution. Their skills and experience will be valuable to solve the insurgency problem.

### 3. COVERAGE OF THE STUDY

The study covered all the four districts of Manipur valley viz. Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West and Thoubal for the purpose of administration of interview schedules. In other words, women from all the valley districts were interviewed during the course of data collection.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

**Sample Design:** One key emphasis of sample design was to make the sample geographically representative. It is important to note in this context that the four valley districts covered in the study represent four geographical regions viz. north, south, east and west. The sample also covered women of different social, age, ethnic and religious groups to make it representative of the diversities in the society. The sample for the study was selected randomly.

**Sample Size:** The sample size for each of the four valley districts is given in table below.

### Sample Size

**Table 1.1**

Districts in valley	Sample Size (no.)	Percentage
Bishnupur	100	26
Imphal East	85	22
Imphal West	100	26
Thoubal	100	26
Total	385	100

In each valley district, one case study was conducted. The women covered for case studies are NGO functionaries and social workers.

**Methods for Data Collection:** The study used the following methods for data collection keeping in view the need for collecting quantitative and qualitative data through primary and secondary sources.

- ❖ **Library and Internet Research:** Data and analytical literature (reports, articles, books etc.) on insurgency, role of women in conflict management, socio-economic conditions of Manipur, state response to insurgency, role of civil society constituents in conflict management and other relevant issues concerning the topic of research were collected through library and internet research.
- ❖ **Administration of Interview Schedule:** A structured interview schedule containing close and open ended questions was administered among the women of Manipur valley to understand, *inter alia*, their level of awareness about insurgency, impact of insurgency on their life and women's role in conflict management.
- ❖ **Case Studies:** Case studies were conducted to obtain qualitative and analytical inputs on the topic of research.
- ❖ **Interviewers' Observation:** Based on their experiences during data collection, interviewers prepared observation reports covering issues like conditions of development, law and order situation and impact of insurgency.

**Data Analysis:** Quantitative data obtained through interview schedules were coded and analysed by using SPSS software. Qualitative data, on the other hand, contributed to analysis of different components of the report.

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## Chapter 2

# INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Geographical Profile

Manipur is one of the eight states that comprise picturesque northeast region of India. Broadly, Manipur consists of two distinct geographical regions, namely, oval shaped Manipur valley (also known as Imphal valley) and the hills that surround the valley from all sides. Manipur valley is one of the Himalayan midlands, like the valley of Kashmir, the Dun valley and Kathmandu valley. It has a flat topography. Because of its height, which is 700 to 900 meters above the sea level, Manipur valley has been described as a little plateau surrounded by hills. Mountains of Manipur belong to Himalayan mountain system. They are parallel ranges of sharp relief running across the state, roughly in northeast to southwest direction. Situated between 23.80° N to 25.68° N latitude and 93.03° E to 94.78° E longitude, Manipur is bounded by Burma (now Myanmar) in the east, Chin Hills of Burma in the southeast, Nagaland in the north, Mizoram in the south and the southwest, and Assam in the west. The international border of Manipur is 398 km. Total area of Manipur is 22,327 km<sup>2</sup>. In other words Manipur has 0.68 per cent of country's land. Area of the valley is 2,238 km<sup>2</sup>, which is barely 10.02 per cent of the total area of the state. The area of the surrounding hills is 20,089 km<sup>2</sup>. Imphal, the capital of Manipur, which is centrally located in Manipur valley, has elevation of 790 m above MSL. Imphal is believed to date back to around 300 BC.

### 2.2. Historical Background

For proper understanding of genesis of insurgency in Manipur valley, a familiarity with certain historical developments of Manipur is necessary. Manipur, an erstwhile princely state, is the oldest distinct political entity in northeast, dating back to AD 33. The Manipur *puran* traces the lineage of the kings of Manipur to Babhravahan, a son of Arjuna (a hero of the *Mahabharata*) who came to Manipur and married Chitrangada, the daughter of the then Gandharva king Chitrasen of Manipur. The others dispute this. They contend that Manipur mentioned in the *Mahabharata* was situated near Kalinga and its identification with present day Manipur is not justified. Many of them even argue that the real name of ancient Manipur is Kangleipak. Only in the eighteen century, the Hinduisation brought this name of Manipur. They complain that even today Sanskritisation was being done. In this connection they cite the examples of renaming of NEFA as Arunachal Pradesh and renaming of Khasi and Jaintia Hills as Meghalaya.

Manipur consists of two distinct geographical regions viz. hills and valley. This feature has been a determining factor in socio-political development of Manipur. Because of its dense population, highly fertile land, relatively advanced technology and better social and economic organisation, Manipur valley became a cradle of civilization and witnessed growth of principalities and kingdom. On the other hand, in the hills, the political system could not develop beyond the village society. Earlier there were seven independent clans in Manipur plains. In due course, one of these clans- Ningthouja (Manyang)- subjugated the other six and developed an integrated Meitei kingdom. The Meitei kings also established their sway/ rule over hill people *albeit* the latter enjoyed plenty of autonomy. Gradually two dissimilar societies

emerged, a homogenous and complex Meitei society, and various heterogenous scattered tribal societies.

Manipur was a nation-state since very ancient times. It was ruled by kings since AD 33 till 1949. All of them were Meiteis. As a nation-state, Manipur had a written constitution- *Loiyumba Shinyen*. There is another version of the constitution of the nation state- *Loyumdea Singn*. Meiteis kings conformed by and large to the rule of law. They tolerated dissent. Manipur had its own independent political culture. Although a part of India, geographically and culturally, Manipur remained aloof from the main political developments of the country. It was not a part of any of the great ancient empires such as the Mauryans Empire, the Gupta Empire and the Empire of Harsh Vardhana. The Muslims also could not subdue Manipur.

**Religion:** Initially, animism, worship of unknown spirit, was the religion of people of both valley and hill areas. Hindu vaishnavism spread in the valley in the seventeenth century. With the passage of time the hill people adopted Christianity in the early part of nineteenth century. By then orthodox Hinduism was firmly entrenched in Meitei society. With the advent of Christianity, the traditional belief system that had provided the hill people with a link, *albeit* tenuous, with Meitei society ended as its new religion discouraged the hill people from observing their traditional ceremonies and festivals as the preachers of Christianity considered them paganish and primitive.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of Christianity aggravated alienation between hill and valley people.

**Language and Dialects:** Manipuri is basically the language of valley people. It is the state language. It is one of the languages recognised by the constitution of India. It is lingua franca of the entire population of the state. It belongs to Mongolian group and has no basic affinity with Sanskrit. Earlier writings of this language are in old Manipuri script. The knowledge of this script is now confined to a small section of scholars. They have taken pains to learn it so that they can have access to the rich and diverse ancient literature. At present Manipuri is written in Bengali script. This script was adopted to avoid investment in Manipuri type foundries. There has been, from time to time, a demand to replace Bengali script by Manipuri script.

Cultural and religious connection of Manipur with rest of India for several centuries has made a significant impact on the development of Manipuri as an Indian language. A large number of technical terms and popular Sanskrit words have crept into vocabulary of Manipuri. Manipuri is one of the oldest languages spoken in India today. It has copious and varied literature, both ancient and modern.

Each tribe of Manipur has a dialect of its own. They as well as Manipuri language belong to Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages.

**Kabaw Valley:** Kabaw valley is the tract of land between Manipur sector of India's boundary and western bank of the Chindwin river of Burma (Myanmar). It is very fertile. It is 150 miles in length and eight miles<sup>2</sup> in breadth. But the valley, which was a subject of dispute between Manipur and Burma in the nineteenth century, is a much larger territory, covering approximately 3000 square miles, which at present forms a part of upper Chindwin of Burma.

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<sup>1</sup> N Vijay Lakhshmi , *Politics, Society and Cosmology in India's North East* (New Delhi, 1998), p.51.

<sup>2</sup> Five miles are equal to eight kilometres.

For the greater part of the eighteenth century, the Kabaw valley unquestionably belonged to Manipur. The British transferred it to Burma on 9 January 1834.<sup>3</sup>

Kabaw valley is still a question, which touches the sentiment of the Meiteis. Many Meiteis feel that government of India has done nothing to get Kabaw valley restored to Manipur and cite the case of Kabaw valley as one of the numerous instances of indifference of the government of India to the aspirations and interests of the people of Manipur.

**Loss of Sovereignty:** Manipur was defeated in Anglo-Manipur War of 1891. The war was basically an unfortunate outcome of disunity and struggle for power among Manipur princes. The British assumed the rule of the state on 27 April 1891. The defeat could result in annexation of Manipur. However, it was restored on 29 April 1892 to the Raja of Manipur, Churachand Singh, subject to the condition that the British reserve and cantonment shall be preserved.<sup>4</sup> Churachand Singh was a minor from a collateral branch of kings. The political agent was made ex-officio regent of Manipur. In 1907, the Raja attained majority and the administration of the state was vested in the Raja (maharaja) assisted by a Darbar. The maharaja was to rule according to the Manipur Administration Rules, 1907. The defence of the state was the responsibility of the government of India, which also had full control over the finances of the state as the budget, though prepared by the Darbar, could be operated after final sanction of the governor-general. Thus in 1892, Manipur became a native Indian state under the British paramountcy.

The British introduced a dichotomy in the administration of the state. The maharaja and Darbar were not given any power in administration of hill areas. They administered only plain areas. The political agent administered hill areas. No Manipuri was given any position of authority in hill areas.

This form of dual government virtually separated the people of hills from the people of plains, aggravating the vast cleavage that had already emerge between them firstly due to two different societies that had developed because of geographical and historical factors, and secondly due to adoption of different religions by these two societies. While the Meiteis practised orthodox Hinduism, the people of hills universally embraced Christianity.

Because of this separation, while the Nagas of hill areas aspire to be a part of greater Nagaland, the people of valley vehemently oppose the partition of Manipur, which fulfillment of the Naga aspiration will bring about. The apprehension of this partition is one of the factors that stoke the fire of the insurgency. After 1891, the British agent had all *de jure* and *de facto* powers to rule Manipur in the name of the native Maharaja till India attained independence on 15 August 1947.

**Manipur State Constitution:** Tikendrajit Singh, a prince of Manipur, resisted attempts of British officers to dominate in the affairs of Manipur. The anti-colonial resistance movement led by him did not end with his execution.<sup>5</sup> It percolated down to the general populace. The

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<sup>3</sup> According to some historians, Kabaw valley was in possession of Manipur from thirteen century till 1834.

<sup>4</sup> A compact area of 310 acres was carved out in an around Imphal for the stay of the British subjects and the British troops and for the location of the British institutions /offices when Manipur was under direct rule of the British.

<sup>5</sup> Bir Tikandrajit Park has been developed in the heart of Imphal town. The tall minar (pillar) in the park commemorates the indomitable spirit of Manipur martyrs who sacrificed their lives while fighting with the British in 1891. A road has also been named after Bir Tikandrajit in New Delhi.

monarchy of Manipur was also autocratic in many aspects and the people resented this oppression. The political developments and struggle for independence in the Indian mainland were also inspiring the people of Manipur. This popular unrest intensified in due course specially in the 1940s. Even before the integration of Manipur with the Indian dominion, there was a demand for popular government in the state. This movement was anti- colonial, anti-feudal, anti-monarchical and somewhat pan- Indian in character.

In response to this demand, a constitution body was set up in the princely state of Manipur. Two sub-committees of this body drafted constitution of Manipur and the hill regulations. Both of these were passed by the constitution body and approved by the authorities concerned including the then British government of India. The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 provided an assembly consisting of 54 constituencies- 30 general, 18 hill, 3 Mohammedans and 3 special interests (for education and commercial sectors). Under this constitution, election for the assembly was to be held on the basis of adult franchise. The constitution also provided for six ministers to be elected by the assembly and one chief minister to be nominated by the maharaja. Thus Manipur became a constitutional monarchy. Under the Manipur State Hill People's (Administration) Regulations, 1947 the responsibility of administration in hill areas was vested in maharaja-in-council, and the minister-in-charge of hill administration, who exercised supervision over the administrative authorities in hill areas.

**Standstill Agreement:** At the time of independence, there were 562 princely states, which occupied two- fifth of the area of Indian sub-continent. The rest of the area was under British rule. The British exercised paramountcy over the princely states and in that sense the rulers of princely states were subordinate to the imperial government. On the eve of Independence, the British divided the area of sub-continent under their rule into two countries/nations- India and Pakistan. India got independence on 15 August 1947 and all states, except Hyderabad, Kashmir, Junagadh and Manipur, acceded to either India or Pakistan. The circumstances, the mood of people and other compulsions were against independent princely states whether recognising or not recognising paramountcy of either India or Pakistan. On 15 August 1947, British paramountcy over the states also lapsed and maharaja of Manipur got full control of state's administration. On the one hand, in Manipur a constitutional monarchy under the Constitution Act, 1947 had emerged, on the other, there were preparations underway among members of the congress to effect its merger with Indian Union. In respect of Manipur, the Indian government desired to settle the merger issue by means of conciliation and persuasion. The maharaja wanted close cooperation and coordination with dominion of India. Except the state congress, every other political party and Manipur Students' Federation were opposed to the merger of Manipur with India. On 11 August 1947, the Maharaja and the dominion of India signed a standstill agreement under which government of Manipur entrusted defence, communication and external affairs to government of India

**Merger Agreement:** On 21 September 1949, Budha Chandra Singh, Maharaja of Manipur, signed the merger agreement at Shillong. It was officially announced on 15 October 1949 when the Maharaja was back at Imphal. With this announcement, maharaja of Manipur ceased to be an independent monarch and responsible government established under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 ended. The insurgents of Manipur valley attribute all the present day ills of Manipur to the merger agreement, which they allege, being contrary to the State Constitution Act, is illegal. They further maintain that the maharaja signed the agreement under duress.

**Part C State and Union Territory:** When the constitution of India came into force in 1950, Manipur became a Part “C” State. In 1952, a 30-member electoral college was constituted by election on the basis of adult franchise. The members of this college recommended the name of five advisors. These advisors formed advisory council of the chief commissioner, who was the administrator of the state, appointed by the President of India. The advisors advised the chief commissioner. They held different portfolios, but had no executive powers. The chief commissioner used to be a bureaucrat. Also all senior officers used to be from outside Manipur. Although the Government of Part C States Act, 1951 provided a responsible government in these states, in Manipur only a council of advisors was appointed in terms of provisions of section 40 of the Act.

The people of Manipur, who had a popular government under the maharaja with a legislative assembly, constituted on the basis of adult franchise, and a council of ministers, were not satisfied with the rule of Mayang (outsiders) bureaucrats. They started agitation for restoration of popular government responsible to them.

Under the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 Manipur was made a union territory from 1 November 1956. The President of India through an administrator appointed by him and responsible to him, governed the union territory. The administrator was initially designated as chief commissioner and subsequently as lieutenant governor. Bureaucrats (officers of Indian Administrative Service) from outside Manipur held the post of administrator.

The Territorial Council Act, 1956 gave a substantial measure of local-self governance to Manipur. But Parliament alone was empowered to legislate for union territories. The council for Manipur consisted of 30 members, elected on the basis of adult franchise from territorial constituencies, and two members nominated by the union government. After the general election of 1957, the territorial council came into existence.

The council had jurisdiction over certain subjects. This arrangement did not satisfy the aspirations of people of Manipur for responsible government. Meiteis were in the forefront of agitation for responsible government though the agitation was broad-based.

**Statehood:** Parliamentarians, cutting across party lines, in 1970 openly advocated for statehood for Manipur and trashed the theory of viability.<sup>6</sup> Many failed to understand reason for which Manipur could not be granted statehood when Haryana and Nagaland (next door neighbour of Manipur) had been conferred statehood. Many warned that if statehood were denied to Manipur any longer, the movement for independent Manipur, which was simmering, would erupt. Many newspapers also canvassed the case of Manipur for statehood. The people of Manipur especially Meiteis continued their agitation in one or the other form including boycotting of the celebrations of the independence day (15 August) and civil disobedience. Eventually, the Prime Minister of India announced statehood for Manipur on 3 September 1970. The Prime Minister inaugurated the state of Manipur (21<sup>st</sup> state of India) on 21 January 1972 at Imphal. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that there are 81 countries including Israel, Kuwait, Namibia, Lebanon and Jamaica, which are similar to or lesser than Manipur either in terms of population or territorial size.

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<sup>6</sup> One of the reasons for which Manipur was denied statehood was that it having a small area and meagre resources was not administratively viable to become a state.

### 2.3. Demographic Profile

Twenty-nine tribes, Naga: 13 and Non-Naga (Kuki-Chin): 16, inhabit Manipur hills. The Nagas occupy the northern, the northeastern and the northwestern hills of Manipur. The Kukis are distributed widely in Manipur, occupying the southwestern, the southern and the southeastern hills. All these tribes are scheduled tribes. The tribes differ greatly in height and built.

The population of the valley, the area covered by the present study, is quite mosaic. In plains, there are five groups of people: the Meiteis, the Brahmans, the Pangals (Meitei Muslims), the Kabui Nagas and the Mayangs.

Geographical evidence shows that once upon a time the valley was under water, virtually like a lake. To start with, human beings must have settled in hills and gradually moved towards valley with the shrinking of lake with the passage of time. These migrants to valley are known as Meiteis.<sup>7</sup> The entire indigenous people of Manipur belong to the same ethnic group and trace their origin, more or less, to the Sino-Tibetan group of human species. According to Hudson, two hundred years ago, in internal organisation, in religion, in habits and in manners, the Meiteis were similar to the hill people. Notwithstanding the thesis that the Meiteis are descendants of hill tribals, they are considered non-tribal.

The Brahmans started to come to Manipur in the fifteenth century. From the eighteenth century onward, starting in the period of king Garib Niwaz (1709-1748), who first adopted the Hindu Vaishnavite faith as a state religion, a large number of Brahmans have emigrated to Manipur from different parts of India. They have merged with the Meites and have become as good as indigenous people. The Meites, living in the shadow of Brahmanical caste values, have acquired a great deal of caste consciousness in their habits and life style.

Muslims were brought to Manipur from Cachar district of Assam as captives in 1606. They also came from Sylhat (Bangladesh) in search of employment. Some came from Afghanistan. Muslims were employed as labourers, gardeners, barbers, turners, potters, sepoy and farm hands. With the passage of time, these Muslims married local girls, got inter-mixed, naturalised and adopted Meitei language.

Of all the Naga tribes, only the Kabui Naga community has been living in plains. The Mayangs (outsiders) include the Bengalis, the Marwaris, the Sikhs, the non-Sikh Punjabis, the Biharis, the Nepalese, and the south Indians. Some of them are refugees from Pakistan. The Bengalis are the oldest settlers. They came to Manipur as priests, civil servants, professionals, teachers and businessmen, mostly from East Bengal. Their contribution to the culture, religious practices and administration of Manipur is immense. The Marwaris migrated from Rajasthan in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The wholesale and other big businesses are in their hands. The Sikhs of Punjab origin are migrants from Burma (Myanmar). They are mostly

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<sup>7</sup> Manipur valley was thickly populated before the Burmese war of 1819-25. During the war, people of valley fled to Cachar, Sylhat and Tripura. Some of them permanently settled in these places. Thousands were carried away by the Burmese troops and settled in Mandalay. When peace returned in 1825 some returned from Burma. This partly explains the diffusion of Manipuri people in Cachar, Sylhat, Dhaka and some towns of Burma. Their diffusion in the Bramhaputra valley started in the eighteenth century when the Ahom king Rajeshwar Singh married a Manipur princess.

traders and shopkeepers. The South Indians (Tamils and Keralites) are refugees from Burma. The Nepalese are in the process of becoming the largest ethnic group next to Meiteis in valley area of Manipur. Nepalese in Manipur are generally domestic servants, government officials, petty shopkeepers, agricultural labourers, peasant-cultivators and livestock farmers. The Bihari labourers are a common sight in different places in Manipur.

Total population of Manipur in 2001 was 2,166,788 (males: 1,095,634, females: 1,071,154; Urban: 575,968, Rural: 1,590,820). In 2001 enumeration was not held in three sub-divisions (Mao Marom, Paomata and Pural) of hill district of Senapati. Estimated population of these three sub-divisions in 2001 was 127,108 (all rural; males: 66,318, females: 60,790). When this estimated population is taken into account, the total population of Manipur amounts to 2,293,896. There has been a steady increase in the population of Manipur since 1826. Regular census data are available since 1901. These show that from 1901 to 1961 females outnumbered males. In the 1961 census, the population was 7,80,037 with 50.4 per cent females and 49.6 percent males. But in 1971 census, males outnumbered females for every 1,000 males, there were 980 females. The presence of a large number of immigrant traders and security personnel from outside of state is partly responsible for this reversal. This trend continues to prevail, as there were 958 and 978 females per 1,000 males respectively in 1991 and 2001. Child (0-6 years) sex ratios for 1991 and 2001 in Manipur respectively were 974 and 957 as against all India sex ratios of 945 and 927. Density of population in the State varies from 847 per km<sup>2</sup> in Imphal West to 25 in Tamenglong. In valley districts, it is 628 and in hill districts it is merely 49. Overall density of population in Manipur is 103. Literacy rate in the State is 70.6 (male: 80.3, female: 60.9).

### Area and Population of Districts of Manipur

**Table 2.1**

Sl. No.	Name of District	Area km <sup>2</sup>	Population
<b>Valley Districts</b>			
1.	Imphal West	519	444382
2.	Imphal East	709	394876
3.	Bishnupur	496	208368
4.	Thoubal	514	364140
	<b>Total for Valley</b>	<b>2238</b>	<b>1411766</b>
<b>Hill districts</b>			
5.	Senapati	3271	283621
6.	Temenglong	4391	111499
7.	Churachandpur	4570	227905
8.	Ukhrul	4544	140778
9.	Chandel	3313	118327
	<b>Total for Hill</b>	<b>20089</b>	<b>882130</b>
	<b>Total for entire State</b>	<b>22327</b>	<b>2293896</b>

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur, Imphal

As evident from above, 58.85 per cent of population of Manipur resides in valley, the area of which is barely 10.02 per cent of total area of the state. Seven Scheduled Castes comprise 2.8 per cent and 29 scheduled tribes comprise 34.2 per cent of population of the state. Manipur has 0.23 per cent of India's total population.

The population of Manipur has grown rapidly. The rates of growth have been larger than all-India rates. The rapid and unregulated growth of population of the state has become one of the most serious obstacles to economic development of Manipur. It has resulted in: lower per capita income far below the all-India average; increasing burden of unproductive consumers; large-scale unemployment and under-employment; increasing burden of education, medical and housing expenditure; very slow rate of capital formation; and periodic food scarcity. The decadal growth of population in Manipur in 1981-91 was 29.3 percent and in 1991-01 it was 21.5 percent as against all-India growth rates of 23.86 and 21.34 respectively.

In 1981 census and 1991 census, Hindus comprised 60.04 per cent and 57.67 per cent respectively of population of Manipur. Current composition of population of Manipur is: Hindus (46 percent), Muslims (8.8 percent), Christians (34 percent) and others (11.1 percent).<sup>8</sup> The above figures show sharp decline in the size of population of Hindus. This is (presumably) mainly because a large number of Meiteis have declared themselves of *Senamahi* faith - the ancient religion of Manipur.

## 2.4. Economic Profile

Agriculture and allied activities are the backbone of the economy in both hill and valley areas. Weaving and pisciculture are other important and traditional means of livelihood in the valley. River Manipur and its tributaries, namely, Imphal, Iril, Thoubal, Nambul, Nambol, Khirgo and Sekmai drain Manipur valley, discharging copious quantity of water during monsoon months (May to September), frequently inundating the land along their banks. The valley is studded with a number of wetlands and glittering lakes including Loktak, which is the biggest fresh water lake of the eastern India. The state also abounds in marshes and streams. Rivers, lakes, marshes, and streams form considerable fishing grounds. Over 70 per cent of rural population, directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for its sustenance. Rice is the main crop of the valley. Pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and wheat are grown on a limited scale. Fruits (pine apple) and vegetables are produced for marketing and self-consumption.

Due to shortage of electricity, transport bottlenecks and poor entrepreneurial abilities, there are no processing and manufacturing industries worth the name in the state. The state is heavily dependant on imports from outside for almost all items of daily use. As such, reins of economy are in the hands of outsiders, who have an inherent advantage over local businessmen in supply of these articles.

There is widespread unemployment and disguised unemployment. There is acute disgruntlement among educated Manipuri youth due to unemployment. Government service is almost the only avenue for jobs for these youths. There were 5,83,653 registered unemployed persons, including 1,62,623 women, as on 28 April 2007. This is besides the fact that a large number of youth do not register with employment exchanges.

## 2.5. Overview

Manipur - an oasis in the north eastern hills, little paradise on earth, a flower on lofty heights and Kashmir of the east - has been acclaimed all over the world for its unique culture, martial arts, scintillating dances, excellent performance of its sports persons and thrilling

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<sup>8</sup> [Http://www.ansers.com](http://www.ansers.com).

indigenous sports. At the same time this birthplace of polo is also a home to various issues and problems: unemployment, insurgency movements, rampant corruption, drug abuse, AIDS, political instability, ethnic unrest and threat to its territorial integrity.

## 2.6. Insurgency

Insurgency is a form of political violence. It is a means to an end. Insurgency is an armed insurrection against an incumbent regime, which may be foreign or national, by a section of local population, who wants to over-throw the existing order for establishing a new dispensation. Insurgency has a cellular development. The initial stage is of direct resistance against the regime. In the intermediate stage, organised groups of undergrounds indulge in violent activities mainly against troops and police personnel. The violent activities include raids on posts and camps of security forces, ambushes of columns/convoys of security forces, and assassinations of selected targets. In this process, often, innocent passers-by and other members of the public are also killed in cross-fires. These groups rob banks, extort contributions, kidnap for ransom, and indulge in drug smuggling and other criminal activities to fund their movement. They liquidate informers and suspects. They resort to sabotage and other spectacular activities like hijacking to overawe the regime and its authorities. Winning and retaining popular support is crucial for the success of insurgency. Their relation with populace is as the relation of fish with water. Insurgents combine political and psychological action with their violent operations. They subtly and on occasion openly manipulate public support towards their cause. They use people's power and their mass support to paralyse the administration and gain publicity. Every terrorist and insurgent movement has both active and passive supporters. Many government officials render tacit support to them. Some of the insurgent leaders are very charismatic. If insurgents can carry out their protected struggle by overloading the defensive system of target regime, the final stage of insurgency eventuates into an open revolt against the military might of the state with a view to achieving its total decimation.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.7. Terrorism and Insurgency

Guerrilla (insurgent) groups are organised on para-military pattern both in regard to their structure and *modus operandi*. They do not indulge in wanton killings for creating panic. They select their targets after deliberation. On the other hand, terrorists bank upon indiscriminate killings. Both insurgents and terrorists believe in violence. Insurgents use armed force against an established order to achieve a purpose, which in their opinion cannot be achieved by peaceful means. Though political system is the main target of insurgents, their motivating factors are rooted in social and economic deprivations. Insurgency is regional. Terrorism is international by nature. Terrorism is a group action, which leads to international linkages. Terrorism is a reaction to certain situation considered unjust by terrorists and their ideologues. In this sense, terrorism is a reactionary movement. Insurgency involves overthrowing of an existing order and its replacement by a new order. In other words, insurgency is a revolutionary movement. Insurgency is based in countryside, while terrorism is based in an urban society.

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<sup>9</sup> R K Pruthi (ed), *An Encyclopaedic Survey of Global Terrorism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Vol 1, p. 30.

## 2.8. Conflict Management- Understanding the Concept

Conflict management has gained considerable importance in recent times in view of the flux that one sees in different regions of the world involving state and non-state actors which are at loggerheads due to political, ideological, economic and several other factors. While some conflicts are confined to a particular region or province in a State, some transcend State boundaries and take shape of regional conflicts and there are conflicts that receive external support from different quarters in different countries due to ethnic, religious or other commonalities, yet remain confined to their base areas. In view of the complexities of issues involved in a conflict situation and the need to comprehend the role of women in conflict management in Manipur, it is necessary to first understand the concept of 'conflict management'.

**Conventional Meaning of Conflict Management:** Conventional meaning of conflict management has many variations within it. Some scholars associate it with conflict containment. These scholars consider "... resolving such conflicts as unrealistic: the best that can be done is to manage and contain them, and occasionally to reach a historic compromise in which violence may be laid aside and normal politics resumed."<sup>10</sup>

In the opinion of others, conflict can be eliminated and hence conflict management is a stage in the handling of conflicts that may follow by other stages as the process of conflict management proceeds. In this context, John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary draw a distinction between conflict management and conflict termination and argue that the former is concerned with the handling of the consequences of differences between adversaries, whereas the latter is concerned with terminating them.<sup>11</sup>

John Burton, the noted idealist, distinguishes "settlement of conflict" from "resolution of conflict". According to him 'settlement of conflict' refers to a situation in which one side of the conflict becomes a loser and the other side a gainer, or a compromise in which all or some of the parties are losers to certain degree. On the other hand, 'resolution of conflict' is situation in which the outcome fully meets the needs and interests of all the parties concerned.

Conflict management, according to the above views, refers to conflict settlement or containment. As rightly defined by Simon Fisher et al., it "aims to limit and avoid future violence by promoting positive behavioural changes in the parties involved."<sup>12</sup>

The conventional meaning of conflict management suffers from several limitations. It considers conflicts either beyond the domain of resolution or are rarely resolved. Also, there are scholars who treat conflict management theory as highly unrealistic, because it assumes that conflicts can be contained and suspended.<sup>13</sup> In conventional sense, the focus is always on action and practical steps, usually in an atmosphere of crisis and urgency, and very little attention is given to the analysis of the problem. While discussing the concept of conflict resolution, a term he uses to include conflict management, Alan C. Tidwell says, "The literature on conflict resolution focuses on "how to do it", with scant attention paid to situational and contextual

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<sup>10</sup> Hugh Miall, "Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task", *Berghof Handbook of Conflict Transformation*, [www.berghof-center.org](http://www.berghof-center.org)

<sup>11</sup> John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.4

<sup>12</sup> Simon Fisher et al., *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action* (London: Zed Books, 2000), p.7

<sup>13</sup> John Burton, *Conflict Resolution and Prevention* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.13

issues. Yet, a more textured and mature approach to conflict resolution demands examination of these concepts and situations.”<sup>14</sup>

**Conflict Management- A New Look:** Understanding of the concept of conflict management requires one to understand the word ‘management’. Management is not limited to containment or settlement as it looks like in the conventional meaning of conflict management. It refers to ‘to administer’, as is understood in disciplines like business management, business administration and others. This is a dynamic and comprehensive meaning of the word. It is in this dynamic and broader sense that the concept of conflict management can be given a new look. Thus conflict management is a process that deals with study of factors that create and escalate conflicts and prevent their solutions and promote containment, settlement, resolution and transformation of conflicts. As explained by A. A. Hamad, “Conflict management is the “umbrella name” of the whole discipline dealing with conflict, its causes, symptoms, dynamics and solutions. It is a single field including description, understanding, prediction, and participation in part or comprehensive, interim or permanent solutions.”<sup>15</sup>

## 2.9. General Particulars of Women Respondents

Since the study is partly based on interviews of women of Manipur valley, it is important to know certain key particulars of the respondents.

**Residential Status:** Out of total sample of 385 women, majority of respondents (68 per cent) have their residences in rural areas and the remaining women belong to urban areas.

### Location of respondent’s residence

Table 2.2

Location	Percentage
Rural	68
Urban	32
Total	100

**Age:** Since the purpose of interview was to collect qualitative data based on sound reasoning and experiences of life, women below 18 years age were not interviewed. As the table below indicates, majority respondents (39 percent) are in the age group of 31-45 years. While 31 per cent are in the age group of 46-60 years, 24 per cent are between 18 to 30 years and 6 per cent are above 60 years old.

### Age of respondents

Table2.3

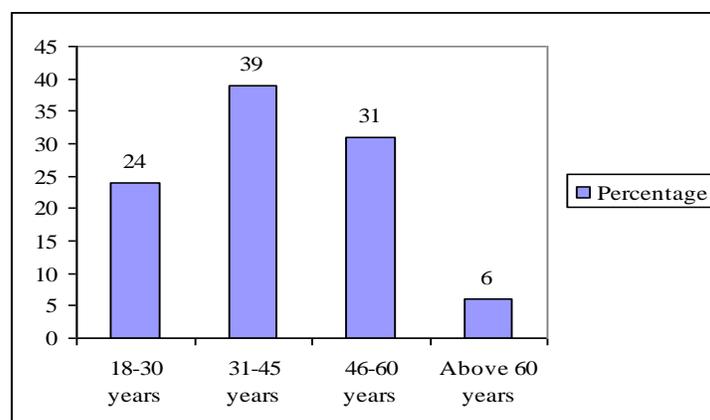
Age	Percentage
18-30 years	24
31-45 years	39

<sup>14</sup> Alan C. Tidwell, *Conflict Resolved? A Critical Assessment of Conflict Resolution* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1998), p.2

<sup>15</sup> Hamad, Ahmad, Azem, “The Reconceptualisation of Conflict Management”, *Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 7, July 2005, available in <http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk>

46-60 years	31
Above 60 years	6
Total	100

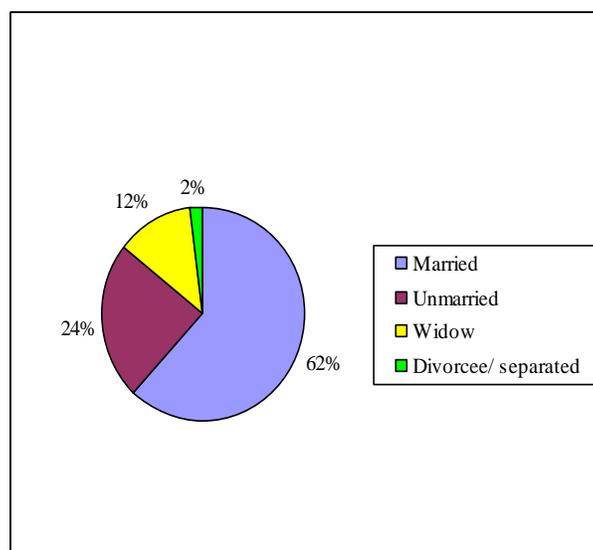
**Chart 2.1**



**Marital Status:** While 62 per cent women out of total sample are married, 24 per cent are unmarried and 12 per cent are widows. Only 2 per cent women are either divorced or separated.

**Marital status of respondents**

**Chart 2.2**



**Table 2.4**

Marital status	Percentage
Married	62
Unmarried	24
Widow	12
Divorcee/ separated	2
Total	100

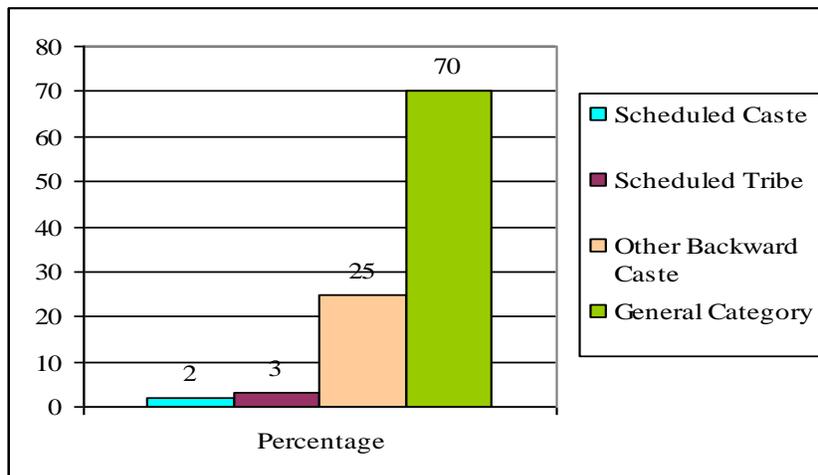
**Social Category:** The social categories of respondents reflect the society of the valley. As noted above, the tribes of the State mainly reside in hills and residents of the valley are mostly non-tribals. Therefore, only 3 per cent respondents belong to the Scheduled Tribe category. The majority of women are of general category people (70 per cent). While other backward castes constitute 25 per cent of total sample, only 2 per cent are Scheduled Castes. As mentioned earlier, the population of Scheduled Castes is minuscule (2.8 percent) and they mostly reside in the valley.

**Social category of respondents**

**Table 2.5**

Social category	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	2
Scheduled Tribe	3
Other Backward Caste	25
General Category	70
Total	100

**Chart 2.3**



**Religious Status:** The religious status of respondents also reflects the religious profile of Manipur valley. Very high majority respondents (83 per cent) are Hindus. While Muslims constitute 8 per cent of total sample, only 4 per cent are Christians. Women, who have been categorised as others, are Meiteis who do not consider themselves Hindus.

**Religious status of respondents**

**Table 2.6**

Religious status	Percentage
Hindu	83
Muslim	8
Christian	4
Others	5
Total	100

## Chapter 3

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN MANIPUR VALLEY

### 3.1. Background

It is widely believed in India that women of northeast India are liberated and advanced and enjoy a social standing equal, if not higher, to their male counterparts and their position in this regard is unparalleled in the whole of South Asia. This impression is highly exaggerated. It is a result of the sociable and outgoing nature of women of northeast India.

Indigenous population of Manipur consists of Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis. Women of each of these communities are socially and economically active. They are aware of their obligations, responsibilities, rights, duties and social standing. Nevertheless, it would be unrealistic to believe that there is a perfect equality between men and women in Meitei society. Position of women in domestic sphere as well as in rituals is secondary to men. But there is certainly no excessive male domination that puts women out of reckoning. It is believed that the position of women in a subordinate status has been legitimised on coming of Hinduism to Manipur.

The social standing of Meitei women dates back to mythological times. Many of them are legendary figures. While Imoinu and Panthoibi are mythological heroines, there are others who are revered for upholding their rights and demonstrating courage.<sup>16</sup> Meitei women have shown their splendid worth in many walks of life. Their contribution in different sectors is briefly recounted in following sections.

### 3.2. Social Movements

Meitei women continue to play a very active role in social sphere. They, when the occasion demands, plunge into the thick of the struggle and more often than not, they have proved that women power has enough punch to bring the stiffest opposition down on its knees. Women social movements emerged in an organised manner in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1904, some miscreants burnt down the house of the British Assistant Political Agent in Imphal. Instead of tracing, arresting and punishing the offenders, the British Resident ordered that the local population should contribute labour and materials to rebuild the gutted house. Meitei women objected to this unjust order that was eventually, rescinded under their pressure. This agitation is popularly recalled as the **first Nupilan (women's war)**. In 1939, ban on export of rice from Manipur imposed in the wake of floods was revoked. This caused acute scarcity of rice (staple food grain of Manipuris) and sky rocketing of its price. A large crowd of

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<sup>16</sup> Imoinu is worshiped as the goddess of wealth. Once she fell in love with a man and both of them swore to be wife and husband. However, when she found that the man was already married, she resolved not to see him again. She stuck to her resolve and spent rest of her life in the service of humanity, especially the downtrodden. Panthoibi walked out of her arranged marriage to join her sweet heart by exercising her birthright to have wedlock of her choosing. Thoibi, a legendary figure, despite being an obedient daughter, made her own decision in choosing Khamba as her life partner. Historical figure like queen Linphoingambi, queen Gomti and queen Kumudni, have set unique examples of handling crisis situations with fortitude. There has been gender parity in Manipur since ancient times. King Chitrasen had only one daughter, Chitrangada. After king's death, she succeeded her father unopposed, as the people believed that the throne belonged to her by right.

Meitei women by their valiant demonstration at Imphal forced the authorities to re-impose the ban. This incident is commonly known as the **second Nupilan**. It is being remembered as **Nupilan Numit** every year to pay tribute to brave women who saved the people from starvation. Many Meitei women fearlessly often provided supplies to Azad Hind Fauj and Japanese soldiers and worked as their guides during assault of these troops in Manipur valley in 1942 in the course of World War II, of which Manipur was an important theatre.

In 1975, in order to improve finances of the state, government of Manipur permitted liberal issue of licenses for liquor shops. To save their men-folk from getting addicted to liquor and drugs, women of urban and rural areas of Manipur launched a crusade. In course of this movement, the women used to get together in groups during night, wait for their men on streets and roads to intercept and punish/hackle erring men, who flouted their diktat against drinking and taking drugs. These women used to turn out bearing mashals to dispel darkness. This movement made them famous as **Meira Paibis (torch bearers)**. This agitation forced liquor shops to shut down and made the government change its policy and saved innumerable youths from becoming victims of liquor and drug addiction. Now Meira Paibis also constructively intervene in family discords and land disputes; and help in checking and controlling immoral traffic and drug trafficking.

### 3.3. Educational Status

As regards level of literacy, Manipur ranks second among the eight north-eastern States of India according to 2001 census.<sup>17</sup> The literacy rate has increased from 59.89 per cent in 1991 to 70.6 per cent in 2001. Among females, literacy rate has increased from 47.60 per cent in 1991 to 60.9 per cent in 2001.<sup>18</sup>

The interviews of women of the valley indicate the level of literacy in the valley area. The interviews revealed that except 25 per cent illiterates, others possess some level of formal qualification. Women with graduation or higher qualification constitute the majority (29 per cent) among all other categories. While those having qualification up to class X occupy second position with 17 per cent, 15 per cent have studied up to class XII. Women educated up to primary level (class V) and up to class VII constitute 8 per cent and 6 per cent of the total sample respectively. In other words, 61 per cent respondents have studied up to class X or higher level.

#### Educational Qualification

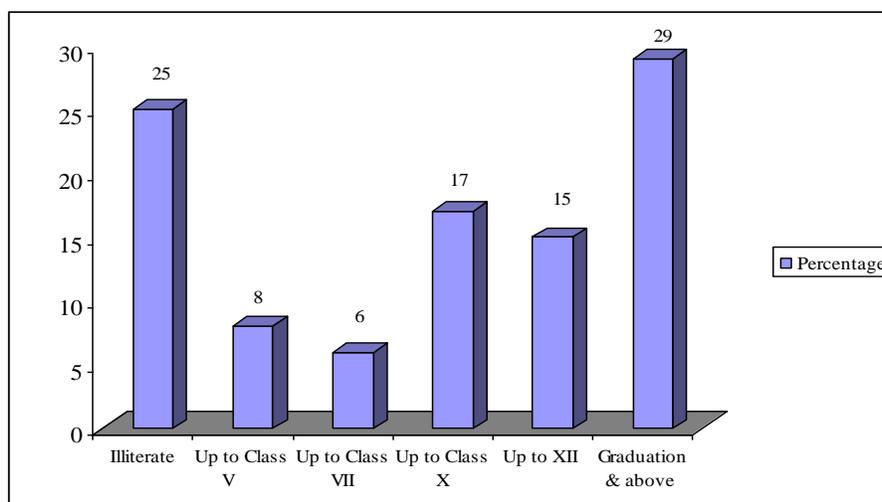
Table 3.1

Educational Qualification	Percentage
Illiterate	25
Up to Class V	8
Up to Class VII	6
Up to Class X	17
Up to XII	15
Graduation and above	29
Total	100

<sup>17</sup> Mizoram, with 88.49 per cent literacy rate, ranks first among all the north-eastern States and Arunachal Pradesh, with 54.74 per cent, is the least literate rate State of the region.

<sup>18</sup> Rate of literacy among males has increased from 71.63 percent in 1991 to 80.30 percent in 2001.

**Chart 3.1**



### 3.4. Economic Spheres

In the valley, women working in fields or fishing in water bodies is a common spectacle. All over the valley, women's markets are interspersed. Imma market (Khwairamband bazaar) is a world famous all-women market in Imphal town. Venders in this market are women and they deal in clothes, fishes, poultry, vegetables, fruits, sweets, food grains, household goods, tailoring material and articles used in religious ceremonies. These women traders are eighteen to seventy years old. Besides them, there are many groups (Meitei Muslims, tribals and Meiteis Hindus) who bring commodities from different places for sale in the market. The number of women traders is growing in women markets of Imphal and other places in the valley.

Marup or cooperative movement is another movement in the economic sphere, which is spearheaded by women. This movement is in the shape of self-help economic groups. Some of the activities undertaken by these self-help groups are *agarbati* making, papar making, doll making, fruit and vegetable preservation and handloom/handicrafts. Many Manipuri women travel to Tamu (Myanmar), Kathmandu (Nepal) and many cities of India on business. Number of women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups has substantially increased in Manipur.

Meitei housewives also participate in economic sphere by growing vegetables on homestead land and selling them as also by weaving, knitting, embroidery and undertaking other cottage industries.

**Professionals:** A large number of Meitei women are doctors, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats, nurses, teachers, police personnel, scientists, academicians, dancers, artists, writers and journalists. Many of them have distinguished themselves as outstanding sports personnel.

The particulars of women interviewed as part of the study indicate their impressive economic status. While 37 per cent women are housewives, those engaged in business constitute 18 per cent, followed by private sector employees (8 per cent), government employees and teachers (6 per cent each) and doctors (1 per cent). If 24 per cent other category women who are engaged in activities like seasonal labour, non-governmental organisations,

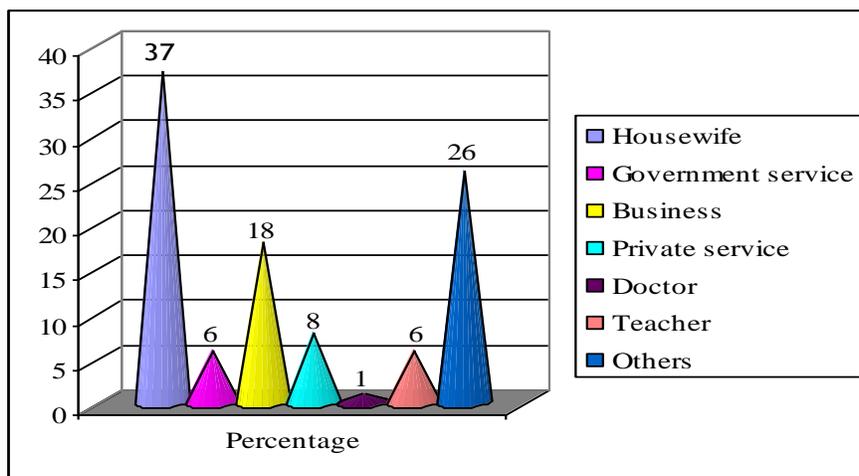
agricultural labour, vending of vegetables/ fish etc. are taken into account, total 63 per cent women interviewed are engaged in either skilled or unskilled pursuits.

### Profession of respondents

**Table 3.2**

Profession	Percentage
Housewife	37
Government service	6
Business	18
Private service	8
Doctor	1
Teacher	6
Others	24
Total	100

**Chart 3.2**



**Possession of BPL/ APL Card:** Possession of below poverty line (BPL) card, which helps the cardholding families to buy provisions like sugar, kerosene oil etc. at subsidised prices and above poverty line (APL) card is an indication of a family's economic status. According to the interview data, except families of 37 per cent respondents which possess BPL card, families of others either possess APL card (34 per cent) or no card (28 per cent).

### Possession of BPL/ APL Card

**Table 3.3**

Possession of cards	Percentage
Below Poverty Line card	37
Above Poverty Line card	34
Any other card	1
None of the above	28
Total	100

### 3.5. Women and Human Rights

Army and paramilitary forces were inducted into Manipur valley in early 1980s and the valley was declared, on 8 September 1980, disturbed area under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) to contain the activities of Meitei insurgent groups. In an insurgency and counter-insurgency scenario, human rights of citizen are natural casualties. If there is peace, the problem of violation of human rights will, by and large, automatically disappear. Induction of forces led to flaring up of armed conflict between the security forces and militants. It was at this time that security forces, allegedly, started committing atrocities against the local people under the immunity given to them under AFSPA. In face of several killings and unaccounted disappearances, allegedly perpetrated by security forces, the Meira Paibi movement started taking roots all over Manipur valley to safeguard innocent people against the alleged high handedness of security forces.

Gradually, each woman of every Meitei house reportedly became **Meira Paibi**. These Meira Paibis used to come out to streets to challenge security forces against their random but willful acts of picking up suspects and causing them to disappear. These protests against security personnel, by spreading confusion and chaos, also created escape routes for insurgents to get away from arrest/detention. Security forces alleged that Meira Paibis were acting at the behest of militant organisations. Denying this Ms. Ramani, a 75-year old Meitei woman and a veteran of earlier *Nupilans* says, "Our struggle is to protect the people caught in cross-fire between the militants and security forces. We come for the safety of our children. Our fight is to protect human rights, which are being abused under AFSPA".<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, some Meira Paibis, though their number is minuscule, admit that there was a time when they (Meira Paibis) and militants worked in tandem and thought that demands of militants were justified but now, having realised their mistake, they no longer align with militants.

The emergence of Meira Paibis in Manipur is a revolutionary phenomenon. Their steadfast struggle against misuse of AFSPA and violation of human rights under extremely challenging conditions has been an extraordinary movement. The climax of this struggle was the agitation over rape and murder of Manorma Devi, allegedly committed by Assam Rifles personnel. The official explanation was that she was a militant and was killed while trying to escape from custody. The death of Manorama resulted in an unprecedented and shocking protest by a dozen elderly and respectable women of Imphal who marched naked to the Assam Rifles base in the State capital. They held placards that read "Indian army, rape us" and "Indian army, take our flesh", and shouted such slogans as "Come and rape us all". The protest was organised at the initiative of 75-year old Thockchom Ramani, secretary of the Women's Social Reformation and Development Samaj. The uniqueness of the protest sent shock waves across the country and demonstrated the determination of women to protest against human rights violations. The Meira Paibis believe that if ordinary people do not question and do not speak out against violations of human rights, they in effect endorse such violations.

Menaka Devi, a Meira Paibi activist and a mother of two children, was kidnapped by four armed men from her residence at Wangoo, Bishnupur district, in the night of 27 June 2006. Villagers recovered her body on the next day. People's Liberation Army (PLA) leaders, an outfit of Meitei insurgents, claimed responsibility for the murder. According to them, Menaka Devi was responsible for killing and arrest of many PLA cadres during counter-

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<sup>19</sup> *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 25 July 2004.

insurgency operations by Assam Rifles, and she had been done to death by way of punishment. Many believe that Menaka Devi was assassinated to deter Meira Paibis and other civil society activists from taking peace initiatives by striking terror amongst them.<sup>20</sup>

Meira Paibis are not the only women group in Manipur valley, though it is the most famous and has the largest membership. Manipur Chanura Leishem Marup is another leading women's organisation among them. It has organised a series of human rights workshops for women since 1997. The activities of the organisation primarily focus on empowering educated young women with the basic knowledge of human rights and on protection of their communities against a range of evils such as drug abuse and alcoholism. There are several other women's groups and NGOs working for women like The Ideal Mothers' Association, Khetri Chandam Leikai Women Development Association, Kumbi Khullalpam Leikai Womens Association, Manipur Women's Forum and The Pioneer Women's Welfare Association which are working in the valley.

### 3.6. Political Sphere

Meitei women are in the forefront in social sphere. Their contribution in economic sphere is matchless. But these achievements do not give them a befitting status in political sphere. Their representation in legislative assembly and council of ministers is negligible. This is a serious drawback as political field is the field in which major decisions affecting all sections of society are made. In this connection, Sajal Nag says, "In Manipur, the women have led revolutionary movements like the *Nupilam* movement. Even now the *Meira Paibis* or Meitei social reformers are always cited as a shining example of a potent force in the social sphere. But it is here they have been stuck since the time they have started. Meira Paibis have never gone beyond social reforms because it is where men want them to be. In short it is the only space of a patriarchal society that has been demarcated for women. These women are so glorified in their current role that they feel happy to remain in that cocoon of social reform - fighting drug addiction, alcoholism, HIV infection and such social evils. Men are so content confining women in this sphere that they do not even try to join these endeavours as if the responsibility of social reform lies entirely on women. Even the women refuse to realise that such social menace could not be fought without adequate political empowerment as they involve major policy decisions. A gender activist, after evaluating the situation in Manipur, concluded that even if the Meitei women felt the necessity and are able to organise themselves politically, they would be immediately declared *persona non grata* in Manipur society and if they persist in claiming their political rights they will be ridiculed."<sup>21</sup> Meitei women participated in thousands in dharnas, sit-in-protests, rallies, demonstrations etc. against extension of cease-fire agreement with NSCN (IM) to Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. They do not hesitate to become involved in political ideas and programmes. Nevertheless, it has not been hitherto possible for them to rise from the base to the top. In this regard Meitei women are not alone. The political status of

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<sup>20</sup> Similar strikes took place, from time to time, in Assam also. Kamala Saikia, a teacher and journalist was killed by United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in 1991 for having scripted an article extremely critical of ULFA. ULFA later accused him of being a spy of security forces. In 1997, ULFA killed Sanjoy Ghose, a renowned social worker, on the alleged ground that he was an agent of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), foreign intelligence agency of government of India. In 1998, ULFA killed Rashmi Bora, a promising artist, alleging that she was an agent of security forces.

<sup>21</sup> Sajal Nag, "Her Masters' Voice" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi, 2006), p. 224-225.

women in developing countries and the levels and quality of their political participation are far from adequate.<sup>22</sup> However, things are slowly changing for the better.

### 3.7. Crime against Women

Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as murder, robbery and cheating, only the crimes that are specifically directed against women are termed as crime against women. Their examples are rape, dowry death, molestation and indecent representation of women. Quantum of crime against women is one of the indices that show the status of women in a given society. Like other states, there is crime against women in Manipur. Incidence of this crime in Manipur, when compared to all India position, is small.

#### Crime against Women in Manipur

Table 3.4

Year	Number of cases (incidence)						Crime rate*	
	Rape	Kidnapping and abduction	Cruelty by husband and relatives	Molestation	Immoral traffic prevention Act	Total	Manipur	All India
2004	31	71	2	30	-	134	5.5	14.1
2005	25	69	20	25	1	140	5.3	14.2
2006	40	79	10	42	-	171	6.6	14.7

\*Rate of crime is the incidence of crime per lakh of population of the year concerned

Source: *Crime in India 2004*, pp. 247-53; *Crime in India 2005*, pp. 247-54; *Crime in India 2006*, pp. 387-89.

### 3.8. Meitei Women- A Force to Reckon With

Though preference for male child persists in Imphal valley and though Meitei women are on the margins of political sphere of their society, their clout in domestic, social and economic spheres is immense and their collective opinion carries weight.

Meira Paibis and other women have rendered yeoman's service in exposing human rights violations by security forces and combating liquor and drug abuse and creating awareness about HIV/AIDS amongst youth of Manipur. The hunger strike of Kumari Irom Sharmila since November 2000 demanding lifting of Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Manipur is the greatest symbol of people's fight for civil liberty and justice. Sharmila has been kept alive by the State government by force-feeding her through a nose tube.

Whatever cause they have espoused, they have succeeded by virtue of their dedication, grit and perseverance. Undoubtedly Meitei women have a very vast potential for public good. They are yet to take a firm and sustained initiative towards resolution of insurgency-related conflicts with which Manipur valley is presently afflicted and traumatised.

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<sup>22</sup> Nayar Shamsi (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Development and Social Stratification* (New Delhi), 2006, p. 271.

## Chapter 4

### INSURGENCY IN MANIPUR VALLEY

Insurgency in Manipur has a long history that goes back to year 1948. In the following sections, different components of insurgency in Manipur valley have been discussed for developing a holistic understanding of the problem on the one hand and for dealing with the issue of conflict management on the other.

#### 4.1. Insurgent Movements

**Communist Uprising:** The insurgency in valley of Manipur dates back to 1948. In that year, Irabot Singh<sup>23</sup> had launched a revolutionary movement in the northeastern part of Manipur, to establish an independent peasants' republic, under the aegis of the Communist Party of India (CPI). The CPI was established in Manipur at the district organising committee level on 23 August 1948 under the leadership of Irabot Singh. This development was inspired by the proceedings of the second congress of the communist party of India held in Calcutta from 28 February 1948 to 6 March 1948 in which peasant's armed struggle in Telengana, Bengal and Tripura for bringing about a people' democratic revolution in India was endorsed. The Red Guard Units were created and deployed for operations against police and other anti-party elements. There were several encounters between red guards and the police at different places in Manipur valley including Bishnupur and Imphal. Since 21 September 1948, the party having been banned, operated as an underground insurrectionary outfit. As an underground activist, Irabot Singh worked untiringly for strengthening of communist party, which held numerous secret meetings for adopting memoranda and resolutions, which were submitted to maharaja. Irabot Singh also published regularly his weekly paper *Anouba Yug* (New Era) from his hideouts. He also circulated among public letters, leaflets, pamphlets and political statements. He toured extensively to galvanise people for supporting the uprising. Though the police arrested several leaders of underground movement, Irabot Singh managed to evade arrest. In early 1951, Irabot Singh visited Burma to enlist support of Burmese communists for his movement and arrange training for red guards units.

Thus the movement launched by Irabot Singh had a vast public support in the valley, enjoyed a reliable foreign connection and was led by a dynamic strategist. After fighting for more than three years, Irabot Singh died of Typhoid at his headquarters at Tangbaw village in Kabaw valley on 21 September 1951. On his death his movement petered out. This movement was a part of an all-South-East Asian phenomenon of communist organised peasant uprisings in Burma and China as also in Telengana, Bengal, Tripura and Assam in India. The movement for a responsible government in Manipur and a popular communist uprising were not superficial. Manipur in the past two centuries had witnessed monarchical autocracy, feudal oppression, Brahmanic domination and colonial sub-ordination and these factors were solely responsible for such popular outburst, seeking change from a claustrophobic and exploitative regime<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Irabot Singh's stint at the Sylhet (East Bengal, now Bangladesh) jail following his involvement in the *Nupilam* movement (women agitation) had proved for him a training ground in Marxian ideology.

<sup>24</sup> Sajal Nag, "*Contesting Marginality-Ethnicity, Insurgency, Sub-Nationalism in North-East India*" (New Delhi, 2002), p.202.

The union home minister in February 1951 stated in the Parliament that there had been a communist uprising of very serious dimensions in Manipur and that the situation was under control. The *Times of India* on 28 February 1951 wrote, “Widespread terrorist activities are reported in the strategic northeastern districts embracing Assam, Manipur and Tripura. India’s eastern frontiers have intermittently been inflicted with violence and unrest since 1949.” The movement led by Irabot Singh was prior to the merger of Manipur with India on 15 October 1949 and was in the context of Asian communist movement of that period. It was Maoist in character. Irabot Singh had visited Meiteis settled in Burma, Dhaka, Sylhet, Cachar and other areas to revive ethnic links before conceiving and launching the insurgency. The movement aimed at elimination of the evils of feudalism and colonialism. Its social objectives were installation of a popular responsible government, panchayati raj, revision of land tenure system, cessation of forced labour and removal of unjust taxation among others<sup>25</sup>.

**Revolutionary Nationalist Party:** In October 1952, the then Prime Minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru, visited Manipur. A deputation of local leaders, not secessionists at that stage, urged him to provide them a government, which would be responsible to the people of Manipur, instead of Parliament in New Delhi. The Prime Minister turned down this demand. The leaders, on being aggrieved by the rejection of their demand, created Revolutionary Nationalist Party, which demanded independence for Manipur. This party withered away within a short period.

**Pan Manipuri Youth League (PANMYL):** There was acute shortage of food grains in 1965. Their prices skyrocketed and hoarding accentuated public distress further. The public distribution system proved utterly inadequate. On 27 August 1965 the students organised at Imphal a huge demonstration against alleged apathy of government to the misery of the people. To maintain order, the police resorted to firing, resulting in death of four students. Several others were injured. Even though Manipur had a council of ministers, the general public held the chief commissioner responsible for the unenviable lot of the people as public believed it was not the ministers but the chief commissioner, who ruled Manipur under the dispensation of union territory. In those days, top-ranking bureaucrats were officers from outside Manipur. The big traders who could manipulate business, being Marwaris, were also outsiders. An impression prevailed among Meiteis that they were the slaves of outsiders. All these factors further fuelled discontentment of people of valley over the grant of statehood to Nagaland (earlier a mere district of Assam) in 1963 and denial of this status to Manipur (statehood). Meitei youth were also angry over denial of reservation in posts and services for them while tribal youths were getting into coveted jobs by virtue of quota earmarked for them under reservation policy, despite securing less marks than Meiteis in the competitive examinations.

Samarendra Singh (a talented playwright) was one such disaffected youth. These young men attributed their predicament to Hinduism, the faith professed by them. Under this belief, they launched a crusade against Hinduism and wanted to annul the merger of Manipur with India and to restore independent entity of Manipur. They formed themselves into Pan Manipuri Youth League, which also published a journal “*Resistance*”. Through this mouthpiece, PANMYL used to lament the merger and popularised the idea that the merger was secured at gunpoint.

**Meitei State Committee:** This political outfit emerged on the eve of 1967 election in which its performance was poor. Despite securing some weapons, it vanished soon.

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<sup>25</sup> S. Sanajaoba, “The Genesis of Insurgency” in Sanajaoba (ed) *Manipur Past and Present* (Delhi 1988), p. 246.

**United National Liberation Front (UNLF):** It was formed on 24 November 1964, with Samarendra Singh as its general secretary. Its avowed aim was to establish an independent Manipur. It committed a number of robberies and dacoities in Manipur causing quite a sensation. It set up a so-called Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM). In UNLF, Kukis and Kabuis were also represented besides Meiteis who were in majority. Samarendra Singh wanted a joint front of Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas to wage battle for independent Manipur. Mizos and Nagas were cold towards him. As such, he decided to concentrate on Meiteis and work towards goal of an independent republic of Manipur. His organization did not have any mass base and depended on youth and intellectuals for support. It had an over ground wing called PANMYL. Samarendra Singh contacted Pakistani and Chinese authorities at Dhaka. They were sympathetic towards him but did not make any commitment.

**Consolidation Committee (Consocon):** By this time N. Bisheshwar and his friend R.K. Sanajaoba, who were close associates of Sudhir Kumar, (foreign secretary of UNLF), wanted spectacular activities. On the other hand, Samarendra Singh was in favour of consolidation and patience. But all of them wanted independent Manipur through armed struggle. Sudhir Kumar, on parting company with Samarendra Singh, formed another organisation in August 1967. This new body was named consolidation committee (Consocon). The supporters of Consocon were tired of rhetoric of armed revolution in which Samarendra Singh indulged from time to time. They wanted to taste action. They were also critical of Samarendra Singh for his failure to bring all revolutionary elements together. They did not like his fascist and dictatorial attitude and his disinclination to forge understanding with Nagas and Mizos. The cadres of Consocon also felt that the ideas of Samarendra Singh were urban based. He had been indifferent to mass mobilization and need for spreading revolutionary network in rural areas. Instead, he exploited rural folk. Sudhir Kumar and his like minded cadre of UNLF felt that Samarendra Singh was laying undue emphasis on establishing foreign contacts, which approach made the future of their struggle unnecessarily dependent on foreign collaboration. Samarendra Singh, on the other hand described Sudhir Kumar over-ambitious, restless and not politically conscious.

Consocom in order to unify all the insurgent organisations operating in Manipur, under one banner and to internationalise the struggle of Meiteis, decided in April 1969 to send a delegation to East Pakistan. Both Sudhir Kumar and his lieutenant, N. Bisheshwar, travelled to Bhanubil, a Meitei village in Sylhet (East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). Bisheshwar came back to arrange dispatch of first batch of cadres to East Pakistan. For this project, money was needed. To arrange funds a sum of Rs. 10,000 was looted from cashier of Imphal College on 15 May 1969. The first batch reached Sylhet on 31 May 1969. In July 1969, Sudhir Kumar announced the formation of a parallel Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM) in exile with himself as chairman. It appears that Consocom was renamed as RGM.

Before RGM could do any thing spectacular, its 56 cadres were arrested between 1 and 6 August 1969 in Tripura. They were returning from East Pakistan after getting training in guerrilla tactics. Immediately after this, eight members of RGM were arrested in Manipur during the same month. Arrests of Sudhir Kumar and Bisheshwar Singh, ego clashes between the two, liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 and grant of statehood to Manipur in 1972 virtually crushed RGM and vanished its appeal. Sensing this, the government of Manipur granted general amnesty and rehabilitation assistance to the members of RGM. This further weakened the organisation. Sudhir Kumar in due course became an overground political activist. He was assassinated on 14 January 1979.

The RGM was a secessionist body, committed for independence of Manipur through armed struggle. It was firmly against communism. Meitei way of life was its ideal. It wanted to revive Meitei pre-Hindu *sanamahi* identity<sup>26</sup>. It lamented the loss of cultural heritage and identity of Meiteis due to Hinduisation. It was also able to generate hostility among the Meiteis against the outsiders. RGM revived sense of identity among Meiteis and created in Meitei society awareness about the danger of influx of outsiders into Manipur.

**People's Liberation Army (PLA):** N. Bisheshwar Singh, for his activities as a leader of RGM, was incarcerated in a Tripura jail, where he came in contact with Naxalites, who were serving their term in the same jail. By the time he was released from the jail, he had become a staunch Maoist. On return to Manipur, he organised his group and on 16 April 1967 led a 20-member group of Meitei youths to China. This group was trained in guerrilla warfare at Lasha. They were also subjected to indoctrination in Maoist ideas while at Lasha. With these and other persons, Bisheshwar Singh set up a new Maoist outfit known as People's Liberation Army (PLA) in September 1978. PLA also announced dissolution of RGM, declaring it a reactionary and chauvinistic Meitei body. With the attainment of statehood and euphoria over it, the Meitei youths had virtually forgotten RGM. PLA resurrected the languished insurgency in Manipur valley. PLA was handicapped for want of sophisticated weapons and funds. It committed a number of violent incidents to snatch weapons and loot cash, spreading panic in Manipur valley. Perturbed over these incidents, the state government on 21 July 1978 declared Manipur valley a disturbed area under AFSPA<sup>27</sup> and banned various underground organisations. The state government was accused of using a sledgehammer to kill a fly. But situation was far graver than the one perceived by the critics of the state government.

A large number of small groups of two to three radical young men were operating clandestinely and committing violent incidents in a planned fashion. They targeted people and institutions representing the state. Simultaneously, there was a campaign through *the dawn* (a mouth piece of PLA) and *Resistance* (a newspaper of PANMYL) to vilify the state government and the government of India and to eulogise the youths who had gone underground. By all means the insurgency in the valley was then being waged on scientific lines. By then corruption in the administration had become rampant and unemployment had widely spread amongst educated young men and women.

PLA clarified that all Indians are not the enemies. It stated that Indian working class was its ally. PLA stood for Meitei national question, asked for patronage from Indian working class in its struggle against the Indian bourgeoisie ruling class. PLA ideologically is Marxian. It seeks to bring about democratic revolution and liberate Manipur from colonial yoke of the reactionary rule of Delhi bandits. It places class over nationality. It rejects revival of old indigenous religion as narrow nationalism. It considers peasants and proletariat of India its friends. It proclaims itself internationalist. It is critical of communist party of India, which according to it betrayed the revolution of Indian working class. It is against Meitei chauvinism, fanaticism and revivalism.

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<sup>26</sup> *Sanamahi* is ancient faith of Meitei people who are now preponderantly Hindus.

<sup>27</sup> Assam Disturbed Areas Act 1955 based on the guidelines set by an ordinance passed by the colonial government in August 1942 to counter the opposition to the war efforts by the Congress, then leading the freedom movement in India, was passed by Assam. Based on this Act, Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act was enacted by Parliament in 1958. Two minor verbal amendments later (in 1972 when Manipur became full fledged State, and in 1986, when Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh became full-fledged states), it is now known as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, with the substance of the legislation remaining unaltered.

Under public pressure, disturbed area order was revoked on 1 August 1980. This was followed by a fresh wave of insurgent violence. The valley had to be declared a disturbed area once again on 8 September 1980 and the army was deployed for the first time in Manipur to deal with Meitei insurgency. The PLA and other outfits were declared unlawful. The AFSPA was promulgated. Under this act the security personnel acquired unquestionable power to encounter/engage with the suspects and destroy property and structures. After deployment of army, curfews, ambushes and encounters became the order of the day. By the middle of 1982, 1089 extremists were arrested, and 270 persons (security personnel: 80, extremists: 97 and civilians: 93) had killed.

On 6 July 1981, army men captured PLA chief Bisheshwar Singh. On 9 August 1981, 12 top ranking PLA activists in a daring jailbreak, escaped from Imphal central jail. On 11 January 1982, there was another jailbreak in which 22 extremists escaped. On 14 February 1982, 22 army personnel were killed in an ambush by a PLA-NSCN column<sup>28</sup>. On 13 April 1982, Kunjabihari, a PLA leader, and 12 members of PLA were killed in an operation by army.

The capture of Bisheshwar and death of Kunjabihari were severe blows to PLA. These incidents plunged it into a leadership crisis. On 8 June 1982, Temba, (a Lasha trained PLA extremist) became chairman of PLA replacing Manikanta, who had assumed chairmanship on 17 April 1982. By the end of 1982 and early 1983, about 50 cadre of PLA including some women left for China for training and securing weapons. Almost all the members of PLA who had gone earlier to Lasha for training, except Bisheshwar Singh, died, from time to time, fighting with security forces.

**People's Liberation Army of Kangleipak (PREPAK):** The exit of Bisheshwar Singh did not result in demise of PLA. Meanwhile another Meitei outfit had cropped up almost simultaneously with PLA. It was named People's Liberation Army of Kangleipak (PREPAK). A young graduate R K Tulachandra Singh led it. The PREPAK professes Maoist ideology. After Tulachandra Singh died in an encounter with army, the command of PREPAK devolved on Maipak Sharma. The PREPAK aims at installation of a socialist sovereign state of Manipur. It seeks suppression of all counter-revolutionary people, class enemies, capitalists and anti-social elements. It believes in people's courts, collective farming, nationalisation of trade and businesses. It visualises government of India as an imperialist power that controls and exploits Manipur through its military forces. It wants to coordinate all movements in northeast India into pan-mongoloid offensive against Indian-state. Gradually PREPAK elements got absorbed in PLA and Kangleipak communist party (KCP), another valley based contemporaneously active underground outfit formed in 1980. According to N Sanajaoba, "The thread left by Hijam Irabot was taken up by the Revolutionary Government of Manipur which started its spade work of insurgency in March-April 1969. The revolutionary situation took a massive character in terms of intensity, public sympathy and warlike postures of the government of India in 1978, when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) followed by People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), the Kangleipak Communist Party (PCP) started armed

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<sup>28</sup> NSCN is a Naga underground outfit with secessionist ambition operating in Nagaland and hill areas of Manipur. Now there are two factions of NSCN-NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K). The cease-fire between government of India and NSCN (IM) came into force in Nagaland on 1 August 1997. Due to pressure of Naga Hoho (a civil society customary body of Nagas), NSCN (K) faction informally agreed to observe cease fire. Later it also agreed on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004 to formally observe ceasefire.

struggle against the Indian army and state security forces, which they termed as occupation army.<sup>29</sup>

In March 1986, three major factions of PLA were visible led by Temba, Binoy and Bisheshwar Singh. In April 1986, return of Manikanta as a new leader of PLA was announced and Temba was denounced as a traitor. The security forces took strong action and succeeded in killing almost all the front ranking insurgent leaders in encounters and managed to keep insurgency within tolerable limits. There was a lull in the activities of underground groups for quite some time.

## **4.2. Security Forces and Human Right Violations**

It is alleged that army and other forces deployed in Manipur valley for counter insurgency work committed blatant violations of human rights with impunity. A 6-member Delhi women's fact finding team led by Mrs. Pramila Dandevate, a Janta MP, visited Manipur and reported on 6 October 1982, "People have been taken away by the army and even the minimum safeguards offered by the Special Powers Act are not complied with. The Act stipulates that any person taken into custody shall be handed over to the officer-in-charge of the nearest police station with the least possible delay. Women also suffer as wives and mothers. They have to wait for hour's even days without knowing the fate of their husband or sons who have been picked up on mere suspicion ... A number of men taken away were given electric shocks. The women were crying because they could hear the cries of men who were being given electric shocks in a nearby house". According to another report, the arrested persons, instead of being handed over to the police, were tortured, liquidated and labelled as disappeared - disappearance pejoratively connotes the permanent disappearance from the mortal life through the torture chamber of the security forces. At the same time it is also true that based on conjecture and propaganda, many of us believe the worst about our security personnel and consider that it is our democratic right and duty not to trust them.

## **4.3. Recrudescence of Insurgency**

Deployment of security forces (SFs) in the state was reduced as the troops had to be pulled out in 1990s for operation "Vijay" to Kashmir resulting in large gaps in security set up. This depletion enabled the undergrounds (UGs) to have a free run and consolidate their position. By late 1980s PLA cadre regrouped. Other groups (UNLF and PREPAK) also became active in Manipur valley in early 1990s in almost a phoenix like revival.<sup>30</sup> There was thus recrudescence of insurgency in the valley with PLA in the forefront. These groups have been constantly in the news for insurgent operations to date. This resurgence coincided with spurt of turbulence of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). However, in the beginning of 2002 there was again in increase in deployment of SFs in the state, which to a great extent, has succeeded in checking the deteriorating trend.

It is believed that spurt in the activities of ULFA was due to abetment of NSCN (IM), which also incited Bodos, Karbis and Dimasas groups of Assam to resort to violence. In the same period, it helped in formation of All Tripura Tiger Force, an underground outfit of Tripura tribals, and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), an underground group of Meitei

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<sup>29</sup> S. Sanajaoba, "The Genesis of Insurgency" in Sanajaoba (ed.) *Manipur Past and Present* (Delhi 1988), p. 245.

<sup>30</sup> Sajal Nag, "*Contesting Marginality-Ethnicity, Insurgency, Sub-Nationalism in North-East India*" (New Delhi, 2002), p.281

insurgents, to intensify violence. Simultaneously, seeds of insurgency were sown in peaceful state of Meghalaya, and two groups of local tribals, reportedly, spawned by NSCN (IM), indulged in unlawful activities. NSCN (IM) took these steps to set northeast region on fire, to establish its hegemony over other underground outfits of this region, and to make government of India to negotiate with it in a bid to the solution of Naga problem and to neutralize other outfits.

**Revolutionary People's Front:** Claims to be the largest militant outfit in Manipur,<sup>31</sup> PLA was declared an armed wing of Revolutionary People's Front (RPF). RPF was claimed to be an umbrella organisation fighting for total freedom of Manipur. RPF also decried Bisheshwar Singh as a betrayer. Irengam Bhorol alais I. Chllrem became new President of PLA. He repudiated any possibility of a negotiated settlement with Indian-state.

**Revolutionary Joint Committee and Manipur People's Liberation Front:** A united front of Meitei rebel organisations was formed in 1992 under the banner of Revolutionary Joint Committee (RJC). RJC was meant for coordination for cadres training, exchange of intelligence and joint operations against security forces. Later (1999) the Meitei rebels formed Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF) incorporating UNLF, PLA and PREPAK, maintaining their independent identity.

#### 4.4. Strength and Linkages

Manipur People's Army (MPA) is armed wing of UNLF. Its cadre strength is around 2500. It maintains link with RPF (Political wing of PLA), NSCN (K), ULFA, Kuki National Front (KNA), National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), PLA and PREPAK.

**PLA-** Beside UNLF and PREPAK, it maintains contact with KCP, NSCN (K), ULFA, Tripura People's Democratic Front (TPDF) and Kachim Independent Army (KIA) of Myanmar. It is known to have largest following among the Meiteis. Number of its cadre is around 3000.

**PREPAK-** Strength of its cadre is around 1500. It maintains link with, KIA KYKL (T) and NSCN (IM).

#### 4.5. Communal Divide and Muslim (*Pangal*) Insurgent Groups

An unknown valley based insurgent outfit called the People Republican Army had advanced money to some Muslim arm-peddlers of Lilong, nearby Imphal, for supply of some weapons. Since the weapons were not delivered as per schedule, the members of the outfit went to Lilong to get refund of money. This resulted in a scuffle that eventually developed into a riot between Meiteis and Pangals on 3 May 1993. So far relation between them had been cordial. Within a period of three days of rioting around 150 persons were killed and many were injured. In keeping with their professed ideology and progressive views, most of the insurgent groups condemned the riots. PLA intervened and threatened that it would kill any one found indulging in rioting. Following this riot, several militant Islamic outfits like Northeast Minority Front (NEMF), Islamic National Front (INF), Islamic Revolutionary Front (IRF), United Islamic

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<sup>31</sup> It was reported that NSCN (K), ULFA and revived UNLF had formed united front called Indo-Burma Revolutionary Front. This front, however, did not make any headway.

Liberation Army (UILF), Islamic Liberation Front (ILF), and People's United Liberation Front (PULF) emerged in Manipur valley to confront the challenge of Meitei insurgents. Three militants belonging to Farook faction of an Islamic outfit including its commander, M Y. Ali, were shot dead by personnel of security forces in an encounter at the foothills of Keirao in Imphal East district on 4 September 2007.

#### 4.6. Multiplicity of Groups

According to a report, in March 2008, as many as 4 Naga, 12 Kuki-Zomi, 2 Muslims and 5 Meiteis insurgent organisations were operating actively in Manipur hill and valley areas. Three Meitei militant outfits namely UNLF, PLA and PREPAK are most active in the valley. They maintain active links with Naga, Assamese, Kuki, Tripura and Myanmar militants. They have a unified platform in Manipur People's Liberation Front. PLA probably has the largest following. They have camps in neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh. Apart from these three most active groups, KYKL<sup>32</sup>-O, KYKL-T and KCP are also operating in valley, though the strength of these Meitei groups is small. All these outfits articulate demand for secession of Manipur from India. They justify this demand on the basis of pre-merger history of Manipur.

Manipur has a large number of tribes, besides Meiteis and Pangals (Meitei Muslims). This situation has resulted in formation of tribe/community specific insurgent groups. Even in some of the communities/tribes several insurgent outfits operate. They are based on clan, sub-tribe, locality, religion, loyalty etc. According to Gurudas Das, "The multiplicity of Meitei insurgent groups does not represent the multiplicity of goals by the different social classes within the Meitei society. Rather, this phenomenon is the manifestation of clash of interest among the top ranking leadership of the insurgent groups. Hankering for power and authority appears to be at the root of their proliferation. Besides, the competition for power and authority, revenge plays some role in the formation of new groups. Examples are not rare when a member of a group has come out to form a new outfit following his marginalisation in order to take revenge against the leaders of the parent group. Besides the process of fission, one can also observe the process of fusion some times at work. Very often two or more groups come together and form a new platform to operate for a common goal for some time."<sup>33</sup>

The Bihari labourers are a common sight in different places in Manipur. Unknown underground militants allegedly shot dead five migrant workers on 8 March 2007 at Ningthoukhong in Bishnupur district. Again, there was a spate of incidents of killing of migrant labourers in March 2008 in valley areas in which at least 15 of them died. Revolutionary People's Front- a valley-based underground outfit and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)- a Naga insurgent outfit operating in the hill areas, condemned these brutalities. The NSCN in an *e-mail* to the *Hindustan Times* stated, "Nagas take pride that no innocent Indians were victimised in such an inhuman manner during our 60-year struggle for freedom".<sup>34</sup> In this connection, the then Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, said in the Rajya Sabha that there was a design to create problems in the name of state, language, religion and tribe in various parts of the country and asked states to identify trouble spots for taking anticipatory actions. These

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<sup>32</sup> KYKL: Kanglei Yawol Khna Lup. It aims to save the revolutionary movement in Manipur. It seeks to rebuild society by eliminating all vices such as immoral activities, drug trade and corruption. It stands for nationalism for entire northeastern region and believes in all for one and one for all. It coordinates with NSCN (IM).

<sup>33</sup> Gurudas Das, "War and Peace" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi 2006), p. 321.

<sup>34</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 20 March 2008.

denials and remarks of the Union Home Minister indicate that quite a few bands of miscreants and criminals masquerade as insurgents in Manipur valley. According to CRPF sources, besides 23 active insurgents outfits, drug addicts, organised gangs of vehicles lifters, groups of armed mercenaries indulging in kidnapping for arson, etc. pose a challenge to law and order in Manipur.

#### **4.7. Women Cadres**

Every underground organisation has its female wing in which many young women cadres have been enrolled. The women cadres are utilised for cooking, housekeeping, watch and ward, and nursing tasks in the camps of organisations. The women members are also utilised for gathering intelligence and for brain washing of girls and women to enlarge the support-base of their organisation in general public. During operation of the security forces, the women sympathisers are made to come forward while the men folk stay behind so that security forces are prevented from launching offensives. During agitation backed by the underground activists, the women sympathisers turn out massively to make the agitation look broad-based and spectacular.

There is hardly any instance where a woman cadre has risen to the hierarchy and command structure of an insurgent organisation in Manipur. However, there are indications to show that women cadres are being deployed as armed combatants. Five militants, including a woman, of the banned People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, earlier involved in a bid on chief minister's life, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Manipur in Bishnupur district on 10 September 2008. The killed militants belonged to Cobra task force of this separatist organisation. The police also recovered several sophisticated weapons and good quantity of ammunition from the killed militants. Three cadres of KYKL, including a woman, were arrested on 17 August 2008, near a bus stand in Imphal town.

#### **4.8. Internecine and Factional Clashes**

Internecine and factional clashes take place among insurgent groups of the valley from time to time. They often sneak into hill districts of Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati and Ukhrlul for shelter, and for committing depredations. They also attack posts and patrol of security forces in hill areas. According to ministry of defence, government of India, "In Manipur, operations have been carried out in Samtal Salient to clear the area of underground groups influence."<sup>35</sup> This area is in Chandel district in south Manipur. In this area action is underway to reactivate the civil and developmental administration and activities.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4.9. Insurgency and People's Sentiments**

From time to time there has been popular resentment against the valley-based insurgent groups. On 16 August 2006 suspected terrorists lobbed a powerful grenade at a crowded Krishna Janmashatami celebration held at the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple complex, Sangaiprau, Imphal. In this incident at least five civilians,

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<sup>35</sup> *Annual report 2007-08*, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Annual report 2007-08*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, p. 13.

including two children, were killed and over fifty others, including five American and two French nationals were injured. More than twenty civil society groups came together to protest against this incident.

There was a bomb blast at Paona bazaar, Imphal, on 17 November 2007. For this incident also, people reacted sharply against militant groups. Nandni Devi, wife of Hem Singh, a blast victim, said, “Rebels are ruthless people who do not value human lives. How they can barter people’s lives for money?”

Geoffery, who contributes regularly to *e-pao.net.*, in his article, “*Nupilan is coming*” web-cast on 17 January 2008 says, “Public scream is clearly evident in various sit-in *dharnas*, protests and *bandhs* by people of all ages, against the useless acts of militants in Manipur. During 43<sup>rd</sup> raising day of UNLF, its president had accepted that outfit has distanced from the masses and closeness between UNLF and the people needs to be restored.” PREPAK, Cobra team, regretted triggering a blast at Ningthoukhong bazar in Bishnupur district on 26 June 2008, in which 12 people, including two children were injured. PREPAK claimed that one of its cadres on hearing of some individuals speaking against the outfit threw a bomb, which exploded. The militant organisation also pleaded for pardon and assured not to repeat the act.<sup>37</sup>

It will be mistake to conclude on the basis of incidents and remarks narrated above that insurgency in Manipur valley is on the wane. Insurgent groups are well entrenched in the valley and their sway over its people is strong. There has been marked improvement in the security situation in some states of northeastern region. However, continued violence by some insurgent groups and their reported links in some states, such as Manipur and Assam is a matter of concern.<sup>38</sup> Many civil society organisations closely coordinate their activities with extremist groups and reflect deep ethnic biases in their projections of problems of Manipur and alleged human rights abuses.

#### **4.10. Causes of Insurgency**

Genesis of insurgency in Manipur valley is embedded in history of Manipur. Meiteis are bitter over many historical developments which they perceive as injustices meted out to them. The insurgent groups in the valley are extreme manifestation of this psyche. Causes which have provoked this development are as follows.

**Unemployment, Deprivation and Poor Governance:** The problems of unemployment and deprivation have affected large sections of people of Manipur. Absence of opportunities for meaningful employment and failure of the state to adequately address the problem have resulted in the youth opting for insurgency. According to Gurudas Das, “Manipur suffers from a failed state syndrome. The failure of the democratic institutions including the government to provide a stable economy and polity appears to be at the root of all evils. In fact the huge unemployment and very less scope for the state economy have created a situation where youth are facing a trade off between unemployment and joining insurgency. The social frustration arising out of non-availability of gainful employment, prevailing of wide spread corruption,

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<sup>37</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 29 June 2008.

<sup>38</sup> *Annual report 2007-08*, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, p. 5

defunct democratic institutions and non-operation of democratic principles have led to the articulation of the demand for secession by the militant organisations.”<sup>39</sup>

**Insurgency- Now a Way of Life:** Insurgents, both in valley and hills, regularly extort cash contribution from traders, professionals, contractors, government servants, service providers, employees of government run and private businesses and staff of local bodies. They also extort supplies from the villagers. Those who default in complying with the demands of extremists for cash and supplies and other diktats are severely dealt with and in most cases executed. This arrangement ensures continuous flow of money and supplies to the coffers of underground outfits. According to an estimate, underground groups obtain around one hundred crore rupees annually by way of donations/contributions.<sup>40</sup> Thus insurgent outfits have plenty of cash to pay remuneration to their activists and soldiers, to enable their top brass to wallow in luxury and to render occasional pecuniary help to their indigent sympathisers.

**Corruption:** It is believed that funds for development are systematically siphoned off by coalitions of corrupt politicians, dishonest bureaucrats, unscrupulous contractors and local insurgent groups, leaving little for actual investment. Some politicians in exchange for protection, election funds and vote banks commit themselves to let the underground organisations control public distribution system and corner lucrative public works contracts. This probably accounts for slow development and lack of employment avenues in Manipur. According to a recent Imphal based report, insurgent outfits, bureaucrats, politicians and contractors of Manipur swindle development funds roughly to the tune of Rs.160 crore annually and development is not keeping pace with the aspirations of the people in Manipur not for want of funds but due to the siphoning off of funds by the underground groups.<sup>41</sup>

This nexus has also created a strong stake for perpetuation of insurgency. There have been instances of attacks by extremists on the houses of several political leaders in some villages of Manipur valley possibly to make the politicians to toe the line of underground elements.

**Foreign Support:** Availability of sanctuaries in areas of Myanmar along international border, which are not effectively governed, and support provided by intelligence agencies of Bangladesh, Pakistan and China and patronage of Burmese insurgents are important sources which enable Meitei insurgents to thrive.

**Demand for Nagalim- A Fodder for Meitei Insurgency in Valley:** The demand of Naga insurgent groups like National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak- Muviah) and NSCN (Khaplang) for establishment of *Nagalim* or greater Nagaland consisting of Nagaland and all the Naga inhabited areas of neighbouring states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya and some portions of Myanmar has become a fodder for Meitei insurgency in the valley. NSCN factions consider the above territory to be rightful homeland of Nagas. The Nagalim is visualized as an independent state in the Patkai range, between 93 degree and 97 degree East longitude and 23.5 degree and 28.3 degree North latitude at the tri-junction of China, India and Myanmar spreading over an area of 1,20,000 square kilometer. The Nagas of Manipur strongly back the concept of Nagalim.

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<sup>39</sup> Gurudas Das, “War and Peace” in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi, 2006), p. 320.

<sup>40</sup> Phanjaubam Tarapot, *Bleeding Manipur* (New Delhi), p.54.

<sup>41</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 23 June 2008.

In August 2000, NSCN (IM) argued that observing of cease-fire only in Nagaland but continuing the fight between NSCN and Indian army in other areas where NSCN has been active (such as hill areas of Manipur) was not meaningful. The chief minister of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Meghalaya opposed the extension of cease-fire in their respective states on the ground that this would legitimatise the claim of Nagas to the territory of these states. Even the chief minister of Nagaland was of the view that extension of cease-fire beyond Nagaland was fraught with dangerous consequences. However, under pressure of NSCN (IM), on 14 June 2001, government of India agreed to cease-fire without territorial limits. The extensions of cease-fire in other areas led to violent and wide spread agitations by Meiteis<sup>42</sup> in Manipur valley. In course of which, besides other incidents, the building of Manipur legislative assembly was burnt down and Nagas residing in Manipur valley evacuated themselves to safer places. Gradually similar agitations took place in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. These unprecedented developments made the government of India revoke cease-fire in other areas. Nevertheless, cease-fire like atmosphere prevails informally between NSCN factions and Indian-state in hill areas of Manipur as in Nagaland which is covered by cease-fire.

In Manipur while people of hills (Nagas and Kukis) are free to settle in Manipur valley, the people of valley (Meiteis and Pangals) are debarred from acquiring immovable property and settle in hill areas. Even then Meiteis are very strongly opposed to unification of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur with Nagaland. Meiteis, though not opposed to the aspiration of Naga unification, oppose disintegration of the historically evolved political boundary of Manipur, which, for them is sacrosanct Meitei heritage.<sup>43</sup> *Nagalim* movement now threatens to annex most of hill areas of Manipur to Nagaland. There is also a fear that if this happens, the small portion of hill areas that will remain will be merged with Mizoram in due course. A psychosis has crept into or is nurtured among Meiteis that unless they fight, their motherland will be totally balkanised and their proud heritage lost completely.

The threat of partition of Manipur over the Naga demand is a strong factor for survival of Meitei insurgency. The government of India's objection to the Naga demand for unification has been at best half-hearted. The Meiteis fear that unless they threaten armed struggle, the demand of Nagas to integrate Naga inhabited areas of Manipur with Nagaland would eventually be conceded rendering millennia-old Manipur to a minuscule valley.

Meiteis are bitter over merger of Manipur with India. They had to wage a prolonged struggle for getting statehood. Their demand for inclusion of Manipuri language in the eighth schedule of the constitution of India was conceded after a long agitation. Sindhi language, which is not the official language of any constituent state of Indian union, was given this honour rather readily.<sup>44</sup> These developments have made Meiteis aggrieved and inculcated in them peevishness towards central government. Insurgent groups in Manipur valley are extreme manifestations of this psyche. They justify their secessionist demand on the bases of pre-merger status of Manipur. Fears of balkanisation of Manipur over fulfilment of demand for unification of Naga areas of the state with Nagaland has further upset/alienated them and augmented their susceptibility to the influence of Meitei insurgent groups.

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<sup>42</sup> Kukies, who along with Nagas reside in hills of Manipur, are also opposing integration of Naga inhabited hill areas of Manipur with Nagaland.

<sup>43</sup> Gurudas Das, "War and Peace" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi 2006), p. 318.

<sup>44</sup> Sindhi was included in the eighth schedule by the Constitution (Twenty-First Amendment), Act 1967. Manipuri was included in this schedule by the Constitution (Seventy-first Amendment) Act 1992.

#### 4.11. Counter Insurgency Measures

**Counter-insurgency Operations:** It would be naïve not to expect an armed retaliation from the state against insurgent groups. This retaliation must necessarily be accompanied by a judicious vision and political initiative for peace that takes care of issues and problems, which have created and bred insurgency. Incompetence, insensitively, profligacy, haughtiness and corruption on the part of those who comprise government machinery and are in command of resources are at the root of most social disillusionments and disaffections. A two-pronged strategy has been generally adopted for tackling insurgency in the affected area, namely, use of security forces for containing militancy and taking of political, administrative and developmental measures for redressal of issues that have led to militancy. Approach in Manipur is also the same.

To facilitate operations:

- entire state has been declared a **disturbed area** under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958;<sup>45</sup> and
- PLA, UNLF, PREPAK, KYKL, MPLF and RPF stand declared ‘**unlawful associations**’ under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. They have also been listed as terrorist organisations in the schedule of above Act.<sup>46</sup>

**The National Security Act, 1980:** Arrested undergrounds are generally detained under the National Security Act, 1980 (NSA). From 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2007, 424 persons have been detained under this Act. The NSA empowers central government and state governments to detain a person to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence and security of the county or India’s relations with the foreign country. Under the Act advisory boards headed by a sitting or a retired high court judge have to be constituted to approve each detention and the state government has to submit a report to the centre stating the reasons for the detention. In case the advisory board feels that the person has been wrongly detained, it can order his release. The maximum period for which any person can be detained under this law is 12 months from the date of arrest. According to a press report, the police use this law to detain petty criminals.<sup>47</sup>

**Socio-Economic Measures:** A two-day meeting of the commission on centre-state relations was held at Shillong on 29 to 30 September 2008. Shri V.K. Duggal, former union home secretary and a member of the commission on centre-state relations said, “The members felt that if the north-eastern states are economically developed, the militancy problem will drop significantly.” This view is absolutely correct, as inclusive economic prosperity will address substantially the social causes that have created and sustained insurgency in north-eastern region including Manipur. In consideration of this aspect special attention is being given to implementation of various socio-economic development schemes and vital infrastructural projects in the region particularly in Assam and Manipur.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> On 12 August 2004, following a massive agitation by the Meitei community over the death of Manorama Devi (a young Meitei woman) in the custody of Assam Rifles, disturbed area notification in respect of Imphal municipal area has been withdrawn.

<sup>46</sup> *Annual Report 2007-08*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, p.141.

<sup>47</sup> *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), 17 September 2008, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Annual Report 2007-08*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, p.16.

**Central Government and Counter Insurgency:** Central government renders substantial assistance to Government of Manipur for sustained counter insurgency measures by providing to state government-

- Paramilitary and military forces free of deployment charges;
- Intelligence inputs;
- Funds and equipment for modernization, strengthening and upgradation of state police and paramilitary forces;
- Reimbursement of certain security-related expenditure including expenditure on rehabilitation of insurgents who surrender to lead a peaceful life;
- Facilities for training of state police and paramilitary forces for counter insurgency operations;
- Diplomatic and administrative assistance in seeking cooperation of foreign countries for containing insurgency and funds for implementation of various socio-economic development schemes and vital infrastructure projects;<sup>49</sup>
- Funds for socio-economic development of border areas and promotion of sense of security among people living in these areas as a part of comprehensive border management;
- Financial support and guidance for accelerated socio-economic development through Central Department of Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER); and
- Livelihood security for households in rural areas through NREGS (National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme).

**Table 4.1**  
**Insurgency Related Violence in Manipur**

Nature of Violence	Period (Number)				
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Incidents	243	478	554	498	584
Extremist killed/arrested	365	772	1186	1097	1443
Security personnel killed	27	36	50	28	39
Civilian killed	50	88	158	96	130

Source: *Annul Report 2007-08*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, p. 140.

#### **4.12. Insurgency in Manipur Valley is Alive and Kicking**

Anti-insurgency operations being conducted to contain insurgency and administrative, development and political action being taken to neutralise causes of insurgency have not had the desired impact.

Valley insurgent groups continue to attack and ambush security forces, kidnap for ransom, extort cash contributions and supplies, recruit cadres, liquidate informers and other suspects, threaten people to toe their line, rob traffic on highways, loot banks, explode improvised explosive devices (IED), overawe government functionaries and provoke/goad common folk to agitate against government. The insurgents even function as **moral police** from time to time. In this connection they enforce dress codes, ban inter-community marriages,

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

impose prohibition, forbid screening of certain types films and prescribe other such restrictions. Insurgency in Manipur valley is thus alive and kicking and has made the valley truly a hotspot. As stated earlier, insurgent groups are well entrenched in valley and their sway over its people is strong. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “The security situation in Assam and Manipur continues to be a matter of concern. Manipur continues to be affected by the activities of a large number of militants/ insurgent outfits divided on ethnic lines with competing demands, with the Meitei groups being mainly responsible for the violence.”<sup>50</sup>

The fact that insurgency has become a way of life and is alive and kicking in Manipur valley is evident from few incidents noted below by way of example.

Three young men were killed on 1 June 2006 at two different places in Imphal East and Imphal West by UNLF as punishment for extorting money in the name of outfit. On 28 August 2008, around 100 commercial establishments including shops of chemists, along Tiddim road, from Keishampat to Kwakeithal (Imphal) remained closed due to exorbitant monetary demand by KYKL cadres. According to a woman shopkeeper demand ranged between Rs.10,000 and Rs.30,000 per month. On 15 September 2008, a Meitei salesman hailing from Heirok was shot dead by two UNLF cadres, at Lalambung Makhang (Imphal), allegedly for disregarding their diktat asking him to go back to Heirok.

On 25 May 2008, at around 9 p.m., Lalheiba group of KCP allegedly exploded a bomb in front of pathology department of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences and Hospital, at Imphal.

On 16 December 2007 at least 8 persons, including two women were killed and twenty-two others were wounded when unidentified militant blew up a crowded minibus by exploding an IED near Paorabi under Lamlai police station along the Imphal- Ukhrul road in Imphal East district.

On 19 October 2008, a massive explosion took place outside the official residence of Manipur Chief Minister. However, there was no casualty. For the blast Cobra Task Force of the banned militant outfit People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) claimed responsibility on 20 October 2008.

On 21 October 2008, around 17.45 hours, as many as 17 persons were killed and 27 seriously injured in a powerful bomb blast near Police Commando Complex and Assam Rifles premises in Minuthong area of Imphal. The blast was by far the biggest ever in the state capital. The bomb was planted on a moped (2-wheeler). News agencies, quoting official sources, said the militant targeted the place where security personnel and civilians were playing lagao, a popular gambling sport, which is organised ahead of Diwali.<sup>51</sup> On 22 October 2008, Kangleipak Communist Party’s military affairs secretary, Lalheiba Meitei, claimed responsibility for the explosion in a statement circulated to media at Imphal. The outfit said the attack was carried out after three days of continuous observation to wipe out the move of security forces to take bribes and encourage unwanted gambling. Describing it as a final warning to those indulging in gambling, the outfit also accused the security forces of

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<sup>50</sup> *Annual report 2007-08*, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 22 October 2008, p.1.

committing immoral activities in and around the area.<sup>52</sup> Commenting on the incident, which is also an instance of moral policing by insurgents, a prominent journalist remarked, “Unemployment, extortion and bases in neighbouring countries sustain insurgency in Imphal valley.” Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the President of India (Ms. Pratibha Patil) was on tour in neighbouring Assam when blasts took place on 19 and 21 October 2008.

*The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi) reported on 8 July 2009 that pharmacies in Manipur have been closed since the past fortnight in protest to the extortion demand of KCP for Rs.10 lakh and the Manipur Chemists and Druggists Association has said that it would not be possible to run the pharmacies if the demand was not withdrawn. The same newspaper published a photograph on 9 May 2009 under the caption ‘Manipur rebels step out of shadow’ showing cadres of PLA conducting a military exercise at their training headquarters near Indo-Myanmar border in Ukhrul district of Manipur on Tuesday (5 May 2009). The write up below the photograph, *inter alia*, stated that the occasion was the first formal interaction of the underground outfit with the media in three decades. The outfit was set up on 25 September 1978.

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<sup>52</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 23 October 2008, p. 15.

## Chapter 5

### INSURGENCY IN MANIPUR VALLEY- PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN

Since the focus of the study is primarily on the role of women in conflict management in conditions of insurgency, it is logical to understand the perspective of women on insurgency. The study tried to capture the views of women in this regard through field-level collection of data in the four valley districts of the State.

#### 5.1. Awareness about Insurgency

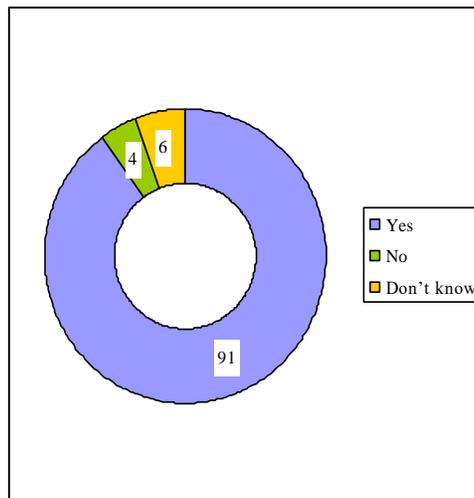
Out of total sample, 94 per cent respondents are aware of the presence of insurgency in Manipur valley. The high level of awareness indicates all pervasiveness of insurgency in the valley.

#### Awareness about insurgency in the State

Table 5.1

Awareness about insurgency	Percentage
Yes	91
No	4
Don't know	5
Total	100

Chart 5.1



#### 5.2. Reasons of Insurgency

Most of the women who are aware of the prevalence of insurgency have ideas about the cause of insurgency. Many of them have quoted more than one cause. In the opinion of 53 percent women, the insurgency is due to economic factors, namely, underdevelopment, unemployment and economic disparities. In other words, these respondents hold economic conditions as primary cause for insurgency in the valley. In the perception of respondents,

greed and lack of morality are the second most important reason of insurgency (30 percent). Many women consider administrative and governance problems (19 percent), suppression human and political rights (13 percent) and illiteracy and lack of quality education (9 percent) as reasons for insurgency. Other reasons cited by 21 percent of respondents include gun culture, lack of parental guidance, continuation of AFSPA, transfer of Kabaw valley to Burma, lack of communication facilities and Manipur's accession to India. These responses show that women comprehend the reasons that have led to insurgency.

### Reasons of insurgency in Manipur

**Table 5.2**

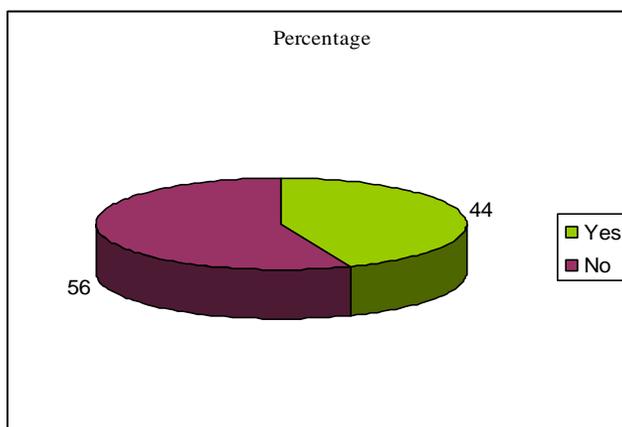
Reasons	Percentage
Underdevelopment, unemployment and economic disparities	53
Administrative and governance problem	19
Greed and lack of morality in society	30
Illiteracy and lack of quality education	9
Suppression of human and political rights	13
Others	21
No response	9
Total	154

### 5.3. Awareness of Steps of Government to Resolve Insurgency

Although high level of awareness exists among women in regard to presence of insurgency and its reasons, only 44 per cent of them are aware of the steps being taken by government to resolve insurgency.

#### Awareness of steps taken by government to resolve insurgency

**Chart 5.2**



**Table 5.3**

Awareness	Percentage
Yes	44
No	56
Total	100

#### 5.4. Steps undertaken by Government to Resolve Insurgency

Measures enumerated by 44 percent of respondents mentioned above are listed in the following table. Many women have spelled out more than one measure. The perceptions of women in this regard are broadly of two categories, viz. operational measures and economic measures. Fifty two percent of respondents have mentioned police, administrative and military measures that is operational measures. Thirty three percent respondents have cited programmes for rural development, employment generation and rehabilitation of surrendered insurgents as steps being taken by the government to redress the grievances which have created insurgency. Twenty seven percent have mentioned recruitment drive, which is also an employment generation activity, as measure taken for dealing with insurgency. In other words, 60 percent respondents know that the government is making efforts to ameliorate economic lot of people as an antidote for insurgency.

#### Steps undertaken by government to resolve insurgency

Table 5.4

Steps	Percentage
Programmes for rural development, employment generation, rehabilitation etc.	33
Programmes for educational development	3
Recruitment drive for police, paramilitary and army	27
Police, administrative and armed measures against insurgency	52
Others	6
No response	7

In the opinion of women who have been interacted during case studies and observations of field researchers, operational measures against insurgency are more visible than the other measures.

#### 5.5. Inadequacy of Governmental Measures

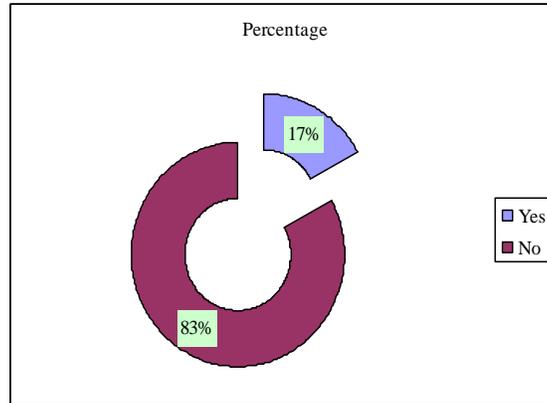
In the view of very large majority of respondents (83 per cent), the steps being taken by the government are quantitatively not adequate to address the problem of insurgency. Only 13 per cent considered the steps adequate. In other words, according to the women, the government has much more to do to bring peace.

#### Adequacy of the Governmental Measures

Table 5.5

Adequate	Percentage
Yes	17
No	83
Total	100

**Chart 5.3**



**5.6. Awareness of Steps undertaken by NGOs, Women’s Organizations and Individuals**

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), women organisations and individuals in Manipur valley take initiatives from time to time for mobilisation of people for building a mass movement for peace. These initiatives include awareness and advocacy campaigns such as *dharnas*, public meetings and rallies; relief and development programmes in the areas of education, health, drug de-addiction and employment generation; sports and cultural events; networking of civil society constituents; people to people contact; and interventions and mediations for settlement of local issues.

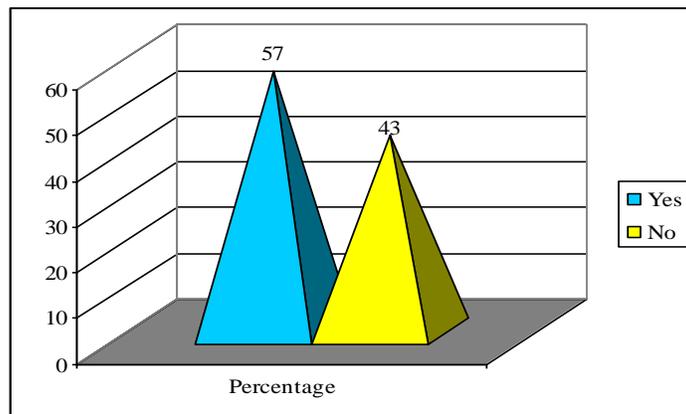
Fifty seven percent women are aware of steps being taken by NGOs etc. for peace building. However, 43 percent women are not aware of the measures taken by NGOs and other constituents of civil society.

**Awareness of steps taken by NGOs, women’s organizations and individuals to resolve insurgency**

**Table 5.6**

Awareness	Percentage
Yes	57
No	43
Total	100

**Chart 5.4**



### 5.7. Steps taken up by NGOs, women's organizations and individuals

Among these steps, awareness and advocacy programmes (*dharnas*, public meetings and peace rallies) top the list (52 per cent respondents).

#### Steps taken by NGOs, women's organizations and individuals

Table 5.7

Steps	Percentage
Awareness and advocacy programmes (dharna, public meeting and peace rally)	52
Development programmes (education, health, drug de-addiction and employment generation)	36
Interventions and mediations for settlement of local issues	17
Others	4
No response	11
Total	119

### 5.8. Adequacy of Steps taken up by NGOs, women's organizations and individuals

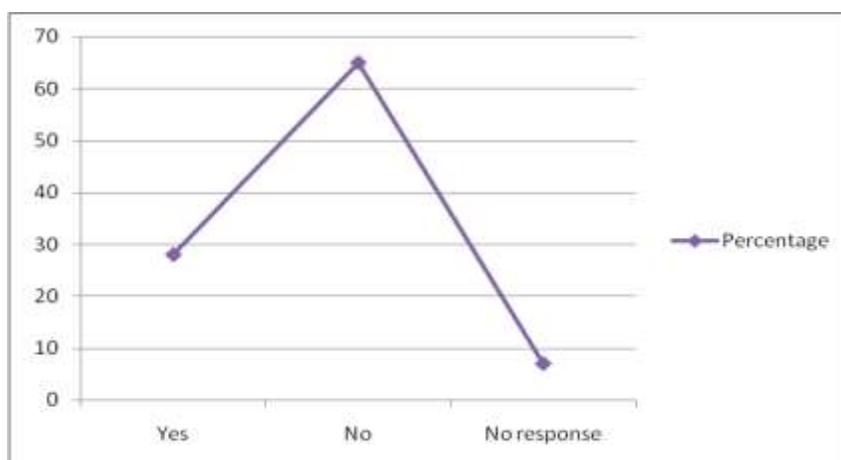
The respondents contend that individuals and NGOs should do a lot more to restore peace as out of those who know the activities of individuals and constituents of civil society, 65 per cent felt that the activities are not adequate in light of the present situation. Only 28 per cent considered them adequate. Those who felt that the present efforts are not adequate stress that these constituents have to exert individually as well as collectively far more to build and sustain a mass movement for peace, good governance, greater probity in administration and rapid inclusive growth.

#### Adequacy of the Steps

Table 5.8

Adequate	Percentage
Yes	28
No	65
No response	7
Total	100

Chart 5.6



### 5.9. Prescription for the Government

As mentioned earlier, most of the women interviewed consider steps being taken by the government for resolution insurgency are quantitatively not adequate. These women feel that besides continuing the current activities, the government should take several other steps for diffusion of the conflict. Many women have suggested more than one step. In the opinion of 40 percent (26 + 14), the government should endeavour for more rapid industrial development, employment generation, elimination of poverty and protection of livelihood. The others suggest ensuring of social justice (13 percent), inculcation of moral values and elimination of corruption (18 percent), negotiation with insurgents (17 percent) and lifting of AFSPA and other unpopular law and order measures (17 percent). Suggestions categorised as others (12 percent) include return of Kabaw valley to Manipur and population control.

#### Additional steps that should be taken up by government to resolve insurgency

**Table 7.7**

<b>Additional steps</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Industrial development and employment generation	26
Elimination of poverty and protection of livelihood	14
Restoration of social justice	13
Women's empowerment	3
Inculcation of moral values and elimination of corruption	18
Repeal of AFSPA and other unpopular law and order measures	7
Negotiation with insurgents	17
Others	12
No response	31
Total	141

## Chapter 6

### IMPACT OF INSURGENCY

#### 6.1. Impact of Insurgency

**Insurgency and Governance:** The entire Manipur valley is in the grip of a profound sense of insecurity due to insurgency. Killings, kidnappings and extortions committed by the insurgents and other armed gangs from time to time have struck terror among common people and made their life miserable and chaotic. In insurgency affected areas administration has collapsed, development activities have been dislocated, corruption is thriving, people are impoverished and quality of life is poor. Insurgency has become a deterrent to investment and commerce. Local issues including caste and ethnicity have come to centre stage at the cost of national issues. The current scenario reflects uncertain, anarchic and chaotic future of Manipur. The all-pervasiveness of insurgency has taken shape of an institutionalized menace.<sup>53</sup>

**Insurgency and Human Rights:** In insurgency affected areas, human rights are routinely violated with immunity both by security forces and insurgents. While the accusations of violation of human rights by security forces get widely known and are vehemently condemned, the fact that many insurgent groups have most appalling human rights record is not generally believed.<sup>54</sup> Cadres of KYKL mutilate human beings to create fear among victims and in society. Insurgents regularly torture people whom they suspect or consider anti-party. Suhas Chakma of Asian Centre for human rights says, “Insurgent groups have a command structure, their leadership cannot escape the responsibility for the conduct of its cadres. Accordingly, the leadership of insurgents is duty bound to prevent its cadres from committing violation of human rights and punish the cadres found guilty of such violations.”<sup>55</sup> Many innocent persons are killed and wounded often in crossfire during factional fights of insurgent groups as also during exchange of fire between security forces and insurgent groups.<sup>56</sup>

**Child Soldiers:** It is believed that at any time more than three lakh children, less than eighteen years of age, both boys and girls, are fighting as soldiers on the side of government armed forces as well as on the side of armed opposition groups, in more than thirty countries all over the world.<sup>57</sup> Children, worldwide, are recruited in armed movements in many different ways—some are conscripted, others are kidnapped, and many are allured. Many children are swayed

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<sup>53</sup> *Kangla Online*, 13 December 2002

<sup>54</sup> According to a press report [“Blame Naxals, not Salwa Judum: NHRC”, *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 6 October 2008], a three-member NHRC team which investigated the alleged rights violation by Salwa Judum found the charges to be mostly based on hearsay. After inquiring into 168 of the 547 allegations, the NHRC team said: “Many of the villagers whose names figure in the list of those allegedly killed by Salwa Judum or security forces were actually killed by the Naxalites.” The press report further stated that NHRC team did not come across any complaints of Salwa Judum collecting taxes from vehicle owners. The report shows that allegations of right violations by security forces or government-sponsored agencies need to be taken with a grain of salt and right violations are committed both by the state and non-state actors.

<sup>55</sup> *The Tribune* (New Delhi), 6 July 2008, p. 13. Salwa Judum is a government sponsored resistance group against Naxal activists.

<sup>56</sup> For example, on 10 August 2005, four civilians were killed and two others sustained injuries in cross firing between personnel of security forces and KYKL extremists at Umathel in Thobal district. Examples like this are many in the State.

<sup>57</sup> Aftab Alam, “Child Soldiers”, *The Sunday Tribune*, (New Delhi), 19 August 2008, p13.

by misplaced sense of adventure and join armed conflicts willingly to have thrill. Children also identify with social causes, religious movements, ideological expressions and liberation groups. In armed conflicts, while children might start out in support functions, they soon are assigned combat roles in which they are particularly vulnerable due to lack of strength, training and experience.

In Manipur, it is believed, child soldiers are in every insurgent group of valley. Many of them are under fifteen years of age. It is believed that number of these child soldiers is between 6000-7500, which is almost equal to around fifty per cent of total membership of insurgent groups. It is further claimed that the recent trend is to induct more and more girls into insurgency movement. The girl soldiers are said to be between 6-7 percent of child soldiers.

According to a press report dated 29 July 2008, since May this year at least 45 children have disappeared from the four valley districts. They have presumably been picked up by militants in a bid to augment their strength. One of the factions of PREPAK paraded six missing children, claiming that they have joined the outfit voluntarily. The press report further stated that as per Manipur police chief, many cases of abduction of children go unreported, as people fear retribution from the militants. The police chief also mentioned that during the year till date, 13 cases of missing children have been registered and the magnitude of the problem was revealed after four children, in the age group of 11-16 years, escaped from the clutches of the militants.<sup>58</sup>

Both state and non-state actors in conflict situations should abide by their obligations under Geneva Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols and desist from mobilising children for waging their conflicts. Children being used in conflicts should be demobilised at the earliest. The civil society, particularly the women organisations, can play an important role in enforcing this international humanitarian law.

**Media and Insurgent Groups:** The Meitei and other insurgent groups often commit atrocities on media persons. These groups expect media persons to surrender very independence that this profession values. The insurgent groups want newspaper editors to treat every one of their press releases and actions as extremely newsworthy and to be printed with little or no editing. Non-compliance has resulted in summons, threats of physical harm and even warning for the closure of newspapers. Pradeep Phanjoubam, editor, of Manipur based *Imphal Free Press*, in a seminar on 28-29 March 2003 at Imphal observed, "If somebody were to ask if the media in Manipur was free, an honest answer would be no. The media in Manipur is more in the nature of a tightrope walk, having to balance between the demands and pressures of many parallel governments besides the constitutionally elected one." On 15 June 2008, KCP activist had asked media houses to stop publication from Monday and threatened editors and reporters with dire consequences if they kept their offices opened and continued to work. As a result, no publications were brought out on Monday and Tuesday. Eventually, newspaper offices across Manipur decided to defy the ban order and resume publications from Wednesday.

Bullet ridden body of 22-year old K Rishi Kanta, a sub-editor with *Imphal Free Press* daily, was found near Langol hill range at Lamphel (Imphal West district) on the evening of 17 November 2008. The murder, according to all-Manipur Working Journalist Union (AMWJU), reflected the extremely hostile atmosphere in which journalists work in conflict ridden

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<sup>58</sup> *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 30 July 2008

Manipur. The deceased happened to be the sixth journalist in the state to be killed by the gunmen. The AMWJU alleged that it had reasons to suspect involvement of security personnel in the crime as the spot where Rishi Kanta's body was found was in a highly secured area.<sup>59</sup>

**Corruption, Drug running and Nexus between Militants and Politicians:** According to R Upadhyay, "The core ideology of all the insurgent groups moves around their respective distinct ethnic identity. With number of splinter groups due to individualised interest and personal ambitions of the leaders, factional feuds among them coupled with, re-alignment with different insurgent groups of entire northeast, and their support link with various foreign powers have pushed the insurgency in a cross-current of strange socio-political whirlpool. Inter ethnic clashes over control of drug trafficking has added another dimension to insurgency in Manipur. This also has encouraged other smaller tribes like Paite, Vaiphei and Hmar in establishing their respective armed groups. Criminalisation of insurgency, clandestine links of its leaders with various political parties, NGOs, government officials and their pressure on allotment of government contracts works make the process of peace initiative more complicated."<sup>60</sup>

In Manipur, as elsewhere, the state has deployed security forces to suppress insurgency. Security forces have controlled insurgency. They have not been able to uproot insurgency. From time to time insurgents assert themselves by indulging in violent activities. Unless the causes such as economic deprivation that have led to insurgency are removed, the insurgency will persist. For uprooting insurgency, removal of these causes is necessary. For removal of poverty and unemployment that have created insurgency in Manipur, a good deal of money is being provided by central government to Manipur government which instead of ensuring speedier inclusive growth and infrastructural development has resulted in corruption and uneven distribution of wealth.

## 6.2. Insurgency and Women

Insurgency is a product of the society and hence it affects every section of society in varying degrees. Also, study of the role of women in conflict management cannot be de-linked from impact of insurgency on women. In this context, the study tried to capture the impact of insurgency on women and the same is reflected in the following sections.

Insurgency has very adversely affected the women. They suffer in the hands of both the insurgent groups and the security forces. There are cases like the alleged rape, torture and killing of 32 year old Manorama Devi and molestation of M. Naobi Chanu by security forces. In July 2006, there was a raging controversy around the rape of 21 tribal women and girls, some of them minors, from two remote villages of Churachandpur district in Hmar hills of Manipur. The incident not only brought to light a tragic side of insurgency but also ethnic fissures in the society. The rapes were allegedly committed on 6 and 16 January 2006. Hmar Women's Association and Hmar Student's Association alleged that men of KCP/UNLF, two valley-based insurgent groups, committed rapes, to vent their anger and frustration at the Indian Army's operations to flush out militants from the hills, on these tribal women and girls. UNLF/KCP strongly denied the allegation, claiming it a ploy of Indian intelligence. As the

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<sup>59</sup> *The Tribune* (New Delhi), 20 November 2008, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> R. Upadhyay, "Manipur- In a strange whirlpool of Cross-Current Insurgency" in <http://www.satp.org/www.ploughshares.ca/content/ACR00-IndiaNortheast.html>. Paper No. 1210 of 3 January 2005

matter heated up, some human right groups and women’s organisations constituted a fact-finding team to inquire the allegation. The team conducted a six-day study. The exercise came a cropper because the team was divided not along facts, but along ethnic lines. The incident shows that women in insurgency affected areas of Manipur suffer humiliation and insurgency in the state has created deep fissures in civil society and distorted human values of fair play and justice. A member of National Commission for Women (NCW) investigated the matter and reported that she believed the victims. Whatever the truth may be, the lack of unity in civil society on an issue as grave as the mass rape of 21 women, has shattered the image of solidarity among the women’s groups in the northeast. According to a Meitei female activist, the leaders of ethnic groups control the responses of women in their community.

Writing about insurgency in northeastern region of which Manipur is an important part, Sajal Nag says, “Under the tragic impact of violence, subsistence has ceased, families disintegrated, children traumatized and women outraged. In the confrontation, many men have run away to the jungles as renegades or have fallen victims to state oppression. The rest of the younger generation, failing to cope with the deterioration, have often taken recourse to drug and alcoholism leading to HIV infections. The brunt of all these problems has been borne by women as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. In front of their own eyes, their relations, families and community were disintegrating.”<sup>61</sup> These observations are valid cent percent in Manipur valley.

Women, whose husbands have gone underground or have been killed in insurgency-related violence, are suffering mentally, physically, emotionally, economically and socially. Interaction with women in the valley during data collection reveals that there are many who are widows, sex workers, victims of HIV/AIDS, physically handicapped including blind. In this connection, Sitara Begum, Secretary of an NGO- Leikei Women Development Association- says, “The prevailing situation forces them to earn money by selling vegetables and even by selling their bodies to support their children. And many widows have to return to their parental homes. ... Women of Manipur are still facing/ struggling the challenges at their level as best as they can, without any proper support from the government.”

### 6.3. Extent of Impact of Insurgency on Women

The extent of impact of insurgency on women of Manipur valley can be gauged from the survey finding that 84 per cent respondents are adversely affected by the troubled situation. Only 16 per cent women are not affected by insurgency. This negative response, as observed by the field researchers, is more due to reluctance of some women to express openly their views on insurgency rather than absence of impact of insurgency on their lives.

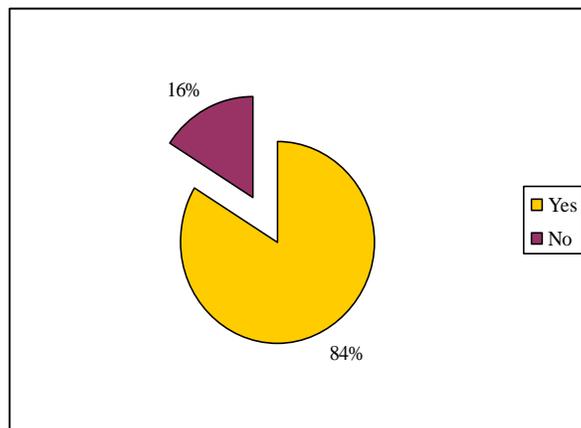
#### Status in regard to affect of insurgency

Table 6.1

Affected by insurgency	Percentage
Yes	84
No	16
Total	100

<sup>61</sup> Sajal Nag, “Her Masters’ Voice” in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India’s North East* (Delhi 2006), p. 221.

**Chart 6.1**



**6.4. Aspects of Life Affected by Insurgency**

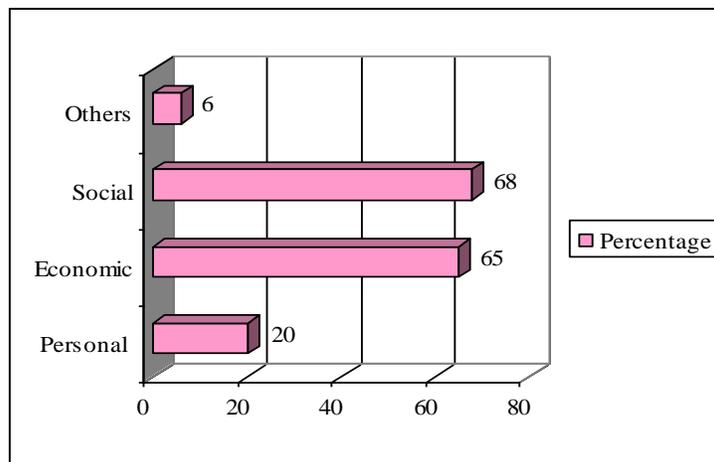
Insurgency has affected different aspects of life of women. Two most important aspects of life affected by insurgency are social and economic in nature. Personal life of 20 per cent women is also affected as a result of prevailing situation. The responses clearly indicate that personal life is least affected by insurgency in comparison to inter-personal or socio-economic life. The affect is visible at multiple fronts, as 59 per cent women noted more than one aspect of life affected by insurgency.

**Status in regard to impact of insurgency on different aspects of women’s life**

**Table 6.2**

Aspects of life	Percentage
Personal	20
Economic	65
Social	68
Others	6
Total	159

**Chart 6.2**



## 6.5. Nature of Impact of Insurgency on Women

In order to further understand the impact of insurgency, the study tried to capture the nature of impact on life of women. In the opinion of 56 per cent women, it has become difficult for them to maintain social and economic wellbeing due to frequent strikes and other disturbances. The situation has also created a sense of fear and insecurity, as told by 32 per cent respondents. In more specific terms, insurgency has adversely affected education of children in the view of 9 per cent women and 3 per cent respondents cited other effects like payment to insurgents, death of near ones, disruption of supply of essential items including fertilisers, children's desire to join insurgent groups for money, kidnapping of children and torture by security forces and police.

### Nature of impact of insurgency

Table 6.3

Nature of impact	Percentage
Inability to maintain social and economic wellbeing due to frequent strikes and other disturbances	56
Prevalence of a sense of fear and insecurity	32
Disruption of education of children	9
Others	3
No response	21
Total	121

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## Chapter 7

### WOMEN AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN MANIPUR VALLEY

Women suffer the most in conflict situations such as insurgency. In domestic sphere, they suffer as sisters, wives and mothers. They are oppressed both by security forces and insurgents. Atrocities committed on women by state and non-state actors in conflict situations include rape, molestation, torture, forced labour and extortion. In Naobi Chanu case, the crime was allegedly committed by a group of uniformed police personnel (state actors). In the case of mass rape in Tipaimukh, the alleged rapists were underground militants (non-state actors) fighting for self-determination. These incidents show that innocent and hapless women are sandwiched between two warring combatants. In conflict situations, many women and children are killed in cross firing. Because of their unenviable plight in conflict situations, women have a huge stake in maintenance of peace. As such, one can expect a positive response from them for initiatives for restoration of peace.

#### 7.1. Women's Mediation for Peace in International Arena

According to Sajal Nag, "Women meditating in war and conflict ridden spaces are not as rare in modern world as is made out to be. In countries around the world that have been stricken by protracted conflicts, women have been actively involved in campaign for peace. In Northern Ireland feminist writers have documented the efforts of women's groups from both sides to organise on working class lines while men were negotiating a settlement. In early 2005 the murder of a former colleague, Robert McCartney, by his own IRA colleagues compelled the sisters of McCartney to take cudgels against the formidable terrorist outfit. The five sisters and his fiancé started a sustained campaign and propaganda against the criminalization of this erstwhile revolutionary organisation and its gun culture. So vigorous was the campaign by these six women that within six months the IRA was compelled to declare that henceforth they would shun all forms of violence and adopt political negotiations for their objective. Similarly in one of the most striking peace campaigns, "Women in Black" is active in the Israel – Palestine conflict as well as in ethnic conflict ridden zone of former Yugoslavia. In Peru, women's organisations have persistently lobbied with the state to end the war and establish democratic process in the region. They used media and other communication network to promote peace and were also directly involved in humanitarian work. In South Africa women campaigned actively against measures that restricted their mobility in addition to the struggle against apartheid. A web-archive has been activated in the area to record the efforts of those unknown, unnamed and unsung women campaigners who had worked to bring the peace settlement in South Africa. In fact if women bagged most numbers of Nobel Prizes in any particular field, it was peace efforts. So far twelve women have been awarded Nobel for their endeavour in peace."<sup>62</sup>

#### 7.2. Peace Initiative of Women in Northeast India

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<sup>62</sup> Sajal Nag, "Her Masters' Voice" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi, 2006), p. 211.

In northeastern India, Naga insurgency is the oldest. It was spearheaded by Phizo. Subsequently, there was revolt against Phizos' leadership and in due course the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) came to dominate the scene. Now there are two factions of NSCN, namely, NSCN (IM) the more prominent, and NSCN (K). Both of them are in cease-fire agreement with government of India. This cease-fire is the outcome of strong desire for peace and normalcy among the people of Nagaland coupled with the desire of the government of India, at the highest political level, to settle the Naga imbroglio amiably. It was the joint pressure of Naga Hoho, Naga Student Federation, Church leaders and prominent NGOs such as Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and Naga Mothers' Association, on government of India and NSCN factions that led to cease-fire agreement between government of India and NSCN (IM) on 1 August 1997. Khaplang faction of NSCN agreed to observe cease-fire due to the pressure of Naga Hoho. It later also signed the agreement. Naga Hoho, Naga Mothers' Association and Naga People's Movement for Human Rights and Church leaders, collectively have brought peace to Nagaland. Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) is a very prominent women's organisation in northeastern region. It was formed on 14 February 1984 at Kohima out of the desire of Naga mothers for conscientising citizens towards more responsible living and human development. Its motto is **shed no more blood**. In other words, NMA was created out of anguish of Naga women over the protracted confrontation between Naga insurgents and Indian state. It, inter-alia, seeks to end the bloodshed and bring peace in the region. There is another Naga Women's organisation, Naga Women Union of Manipur (NWUM). It collaborated with NMA in bringing peace (informally) in Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. Because of the efforts of NMA and NWUM, Naga inhabited areas of Manipur are peaceful. In these areas, in these days, there is no direct conflict between Naga insurgents and security forces. In these areas fights between factions of Naga undergrounds are also minimal.

Kuki civil society organisations like Kuki Mothers' Association have brought out cessation of operations between Kuki armed outfits and security forces as also among factions of Kuki militants. In the context of these development, Sajal Nag remarks that studies reveal, "In an otherwise doomed situation in India, the women in northeast India have been playing an important role, that of peace makers, to bring order in their conflict ridden societies. It was peace making not between families or clans or tribes but underground insurgents, called national workers, and the government of India. It was not only unique but also unparalleled in entire South Asia."<sup>63</sup>

### **7.3. Appeal to Women Groups for Peace Initiative**

There is acute distress, insecurity, chaos and social tension in Manipur valley due to insurgency. There is also subdued resentment among the people against criminal activities of insurgent groups. Many intellectuals have urged Meira Paibis and other women organisations to prevail upon government of India and insurgent outfits for peaceful settlement of insurgency problem in Manipur valley. In view of long tradition of Meitei women of successfully intervening in socio-economic problems and safeguarding human rights, people have great expectations from Meitei women for ushering peace and tranquility in Manipur valley.

### **7.4. Role of Women in Conflict Management**

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<sup>63</sup> Sajal Nag, "Her Masters' Voice" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi, 2006), p. 208

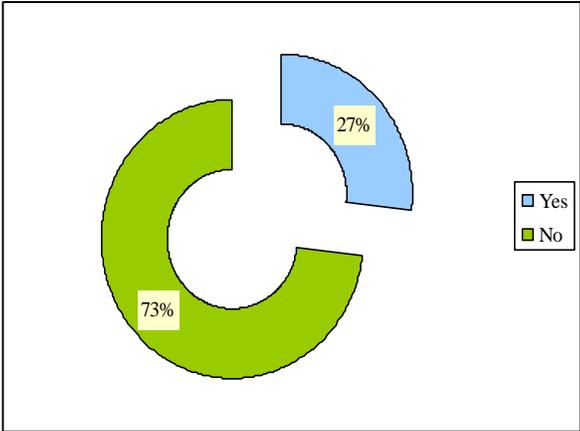
**Membership of Organisations:** Interviews of women in the valley revealed that only 27 per cent of them are members of organisations which are working for peace in the valley. The remaining 73 per cent are not members of any organisations or women’s organisations which are working for peace.

**Membership of organizations working for peace in Manipur**

**Table 7.1**

Membership	Percentage
Yes	27
No	73
Total	100

**Chart 7.1**

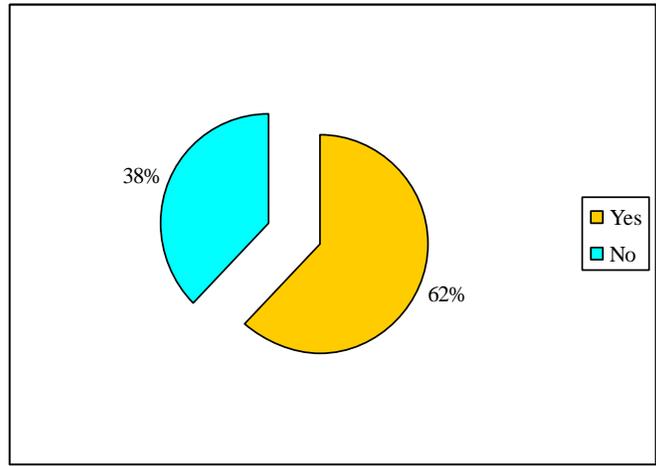


The organisations of which interviewed women are members are: Meira Paibi, Women’s Welfare Association, Freedom from Hunger, Jhain, Awang Kishan Zeikai, Lakshmi Khongnang Khog Club, People’s Welfare forum and Market Women’s Committee.

**Participation in peace building:** Although majority women respondents are not members of any organisations, their level of participation in peace building activities is quite encouraging as 62 per cent of total sample have participated in different types of activities organised for peace in the valley. Non-participation of 38 percent in such activities shows there is substantial further scope for mobilisation women in peace building activities.

**Participation in peace building activities**

**Chart 7.2**



Picture 7.1



Women performing a traditional ritual in Imphal praying for peace in Manipur

(Photo: Ritu Raj Konwar)

**Nature of Peace Building Activities:** Women participate in different peace building activities that are organised by valley-based civil society organisations, including women organisations. While participation level is the highest in case of peace rallies and *dharnas* (58 per cent), protest marches and rallies against death, kidnapping and other types of atrocities occupy the second position (45 per cent respondents). Public meetings occupy an important position among the activities with participation level of 20 per cent respondents. Many in Manipur valley consider withdrawal of AFSPA against which there is a widespread resentment, an important measure for creating environment conducive for restoration of peace. Ten per cent respondents participated in rallies for lifting of AFSPA. Only 2 per cent women participated in different other activities like national integrity day observation.

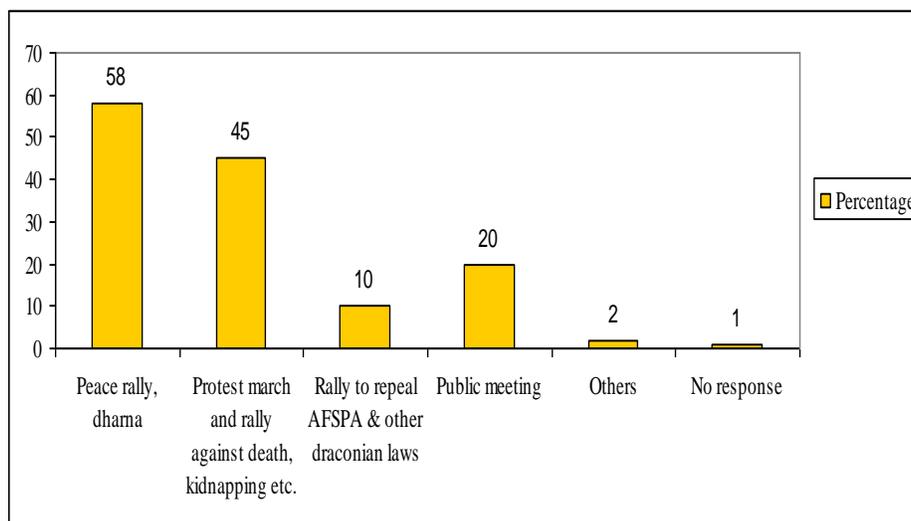
**Nature of peace building activities in which respondents participated**

Table 7.3

Nature of activities	

Peace rally and <i>dharna</i>	58
Protest march and rally against death, kidnapping etc.	45
Rally to repeal AFSPA and other draconian laws	10
Public meeting	20
Others	2
No response	1
Total	135

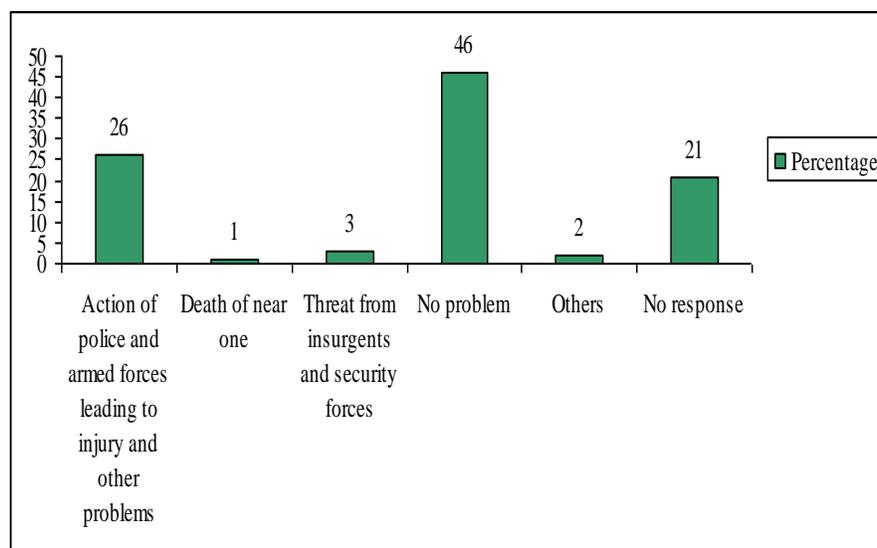
**Chart 7.3**



**Nature of Problems faced during Participation:** As the responses of women in the valley indicate, the most important problem faced by them while participating in different peace building activities is related to actions of police and armed forces. Out of total sample, 26 per cent have faced actions of police and armed forces leading to injury and other problems. There is a positive aspect that 46 per cent of those who participated in different activities did not face any problem. This indicates that there is space for civil society activism and democratic protests in the State for peace building purposes.

**Nature of problems faced during participation in peace building activities**

**Chart 7.4**



**Table 7.3**

<b>Nature of problems</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Action of police and armed forces leading to injury and other problems	26
Death of near one	1
Threat from insurgents and security forces	3
No problem	46
Others	2
No response	21
Total	100

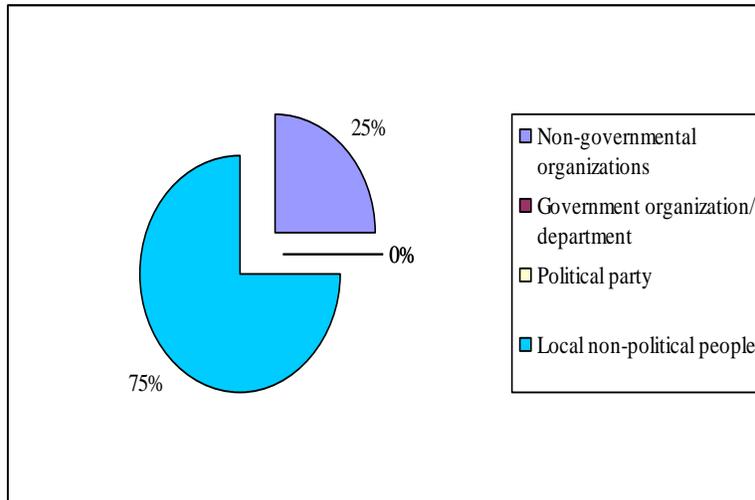
**Organisers of Peace Building Activities:** Interestingly, the organisers of peace building activities like peace rallies, public meetings and protest marches are either non-governmental organisations (25 per cent) or local non-political people (75 per cent). In other words, the initiatives are results of civil society organisations and concerned individuals. Political parties and government organisations are not active in this regard. Therefore, there is scope for broadening the level of institutional participation, especially participation of political actors and governmental agencies in order to make it inclusive in nature.

#### **Organiser of peace building initiatives**

**Table 7.4**

<b>Organizer</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Non-governmental organizations	25
Government organization/ department	0
Political party	0
Local non-political people	75
Total	100

**Chart 7.5**



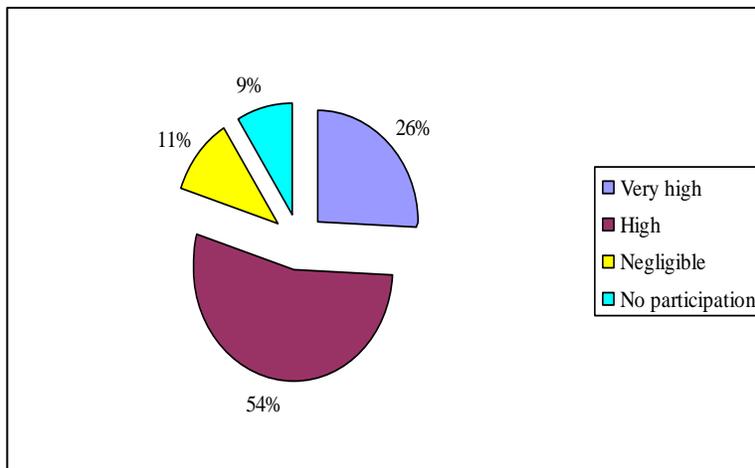
**Extent of Women’s Participation in Peace Building Activities:** Besides capturing the extent and nature of participation of respondents in peace building activities, the study tried to understand the level of participation of women *in general* in such activities. While 54 per cent (the highest) respondents termed the extent of women’s participation in peace initiatives ‘high’, 26 per cent termed it as ‘very high’. In other words, except 20 per cent women who considered women’s participation as either negligible or non-existent, others spoke positively about it. This is indicative of women’s involvement in peace building on the one hand and their potential in influencing the process of conflict management in the State on the other hand.

**Extent of women’s participation in peace initiatives to solve problem of insurgency**

**Table 7.5**

Extent of women’s participation	Percentage
Very high	26
High	54
Negligible	11
No participation	9
Total	100

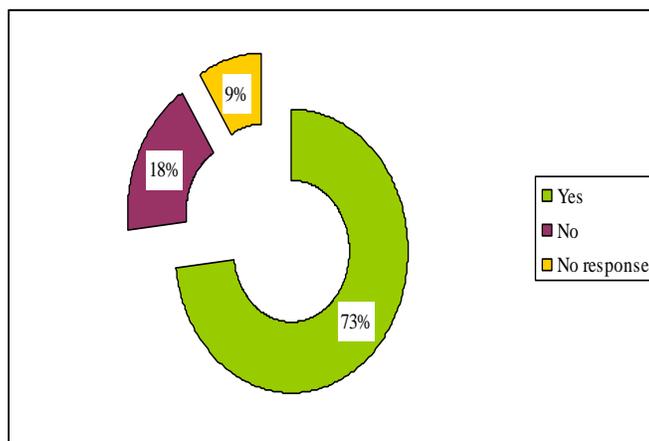
**Chart 7.6**



**Potential of Peace Building Activities:** There is a great deal of optimism in the ability of present peace building activities in meeting the target. In the opinion of 73 per cent respondents, the peace building activities undertaken by non-governmental organisations and women’s organisations will help in solving the problem of insurgency.

**Views on contribution of activities of women’s and other organisations to peace**

**Chart 7.7**



**Table 7.6**

Present activities will bring peace	Percentage
Yes	73
No	18
No response	9
Total	100

**7.4. Women’s Suggestions to Make their Role Effective for Conflict Management**

Interviews of women clearly brought to light the role that women can play for conflict management. Since the term ‘conflict management’ has been used in this report in a comprehensive sense, the roles visualised by women for peace are in tune with the meaning of conflict management. Out of total sample, 29 per cent women stressed on their participation in development and social welfare activities in order to bring peace in the valley. While 20 per cent women visualised their role in awareness and advocacy activities, 16 per cent emphasised on protection of rights of women and children. Interestingly, 13 per cent women visualised their role in engaging the insurgents and other stakeholders in talks for negotiated settlement. There are 15 per cent women who wanted to play different other roles like crusader against corruption, participation in activities of NGOs, generator of employment opportunities and help in inculcating moral values among the people.

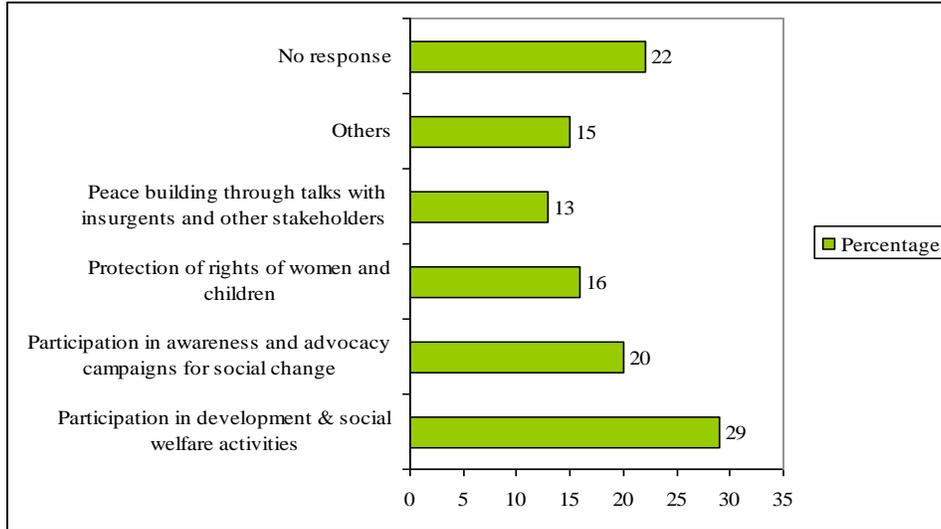
**Role that respondents can play as women in peace process**

**Table 7.8**

Role	Percentage
Participation in development and social welfare activities	29
Participation in awareness and advocacy campaigns for social change	20

Protection of rights of women and children	16
Peace building through talks with insurgents and other stakeholders	13
Others	15
No response	22
Total	115

**Chart 7.8**



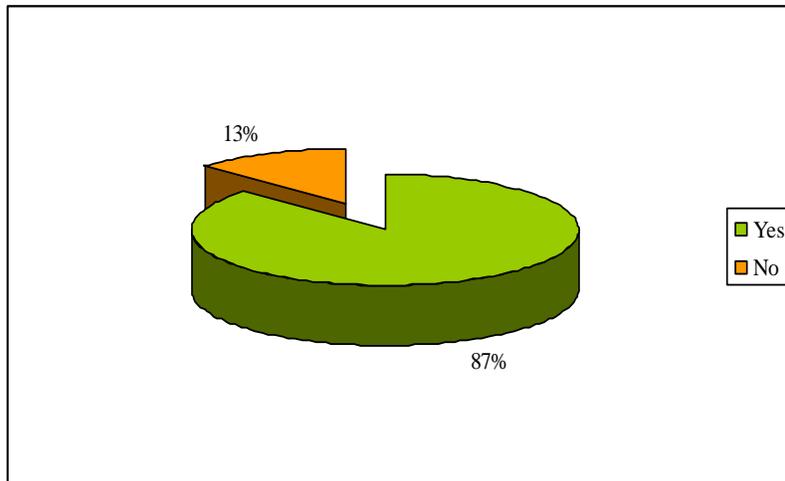
Significantly, the respondents in the valley see a lot of potential in women in managing the conflict situation. Out of total sample, 87 per cent women said that they could play a key role in the peace building process. This also demonstrates their eagerness for a proactive role.

**Women’s ability to play a key role in peace process**

**Table 7.9**

Women can play a key role	Percentage
Yes	87
No	13
Total	100

**Chart 7.9**



## 7.5. Suggestions for women and women's organizations

Women and women's organisations in the valley can actively pursue different measures to bring peace in the State. The most important measure that they can take up is to generate awareness about social and economic problems faced by the people (32 per cent respondents) with a view to build and sustain mass movement for negotiated and peaceful diffusion of grievances that have created and sustained insurgency. Involvement in development measures like employment generation, education etc. occupy an almost equally important position with 27 per cent women in support of the view. There is also a need for initiating talks with insurgents and women and women's organisations can be a part of the negotiation process. The suggestions categorised as 'others' are the following: women should groom their children properly, protest against armed forces and insurgents, foster unity among the people, coordination among NGOs and women's organisations and fight for legal protection for women.

### Prescriptions for women and women's organizations to bring peace

**Table 7.10**

Prescriptions	Percentage
Generation of awareness about social and economic issues	32
Development measures (employment generation, education etc.)	27
Talks with insurgents	11
Others	21
No response	22
Total	113

## 7.6. Role of Government

The role of government in facilitating women's participation in conflict management process is enormous. In the opinion of respondents, the government should take up the following steps, noted in terms of percentage value in descending order:

- ❖ Provisions for funds and other incentives for women and women's organizations
- ❖ Legal and other safeguards for women
- ❖ Provisions for employment opportunities
- ❖ Improvement in security situation in the State
- ❖ Elimination of poverty and economic insecurity

Besides the above important steps, some other steps suggested are: establishment of government-sponsored women's organisation, promotion of women's education, training of women as peacemakers and reservation of seats for women in the State Assembly should also be implemented in order to encourage women's participation in peace building initiatives.

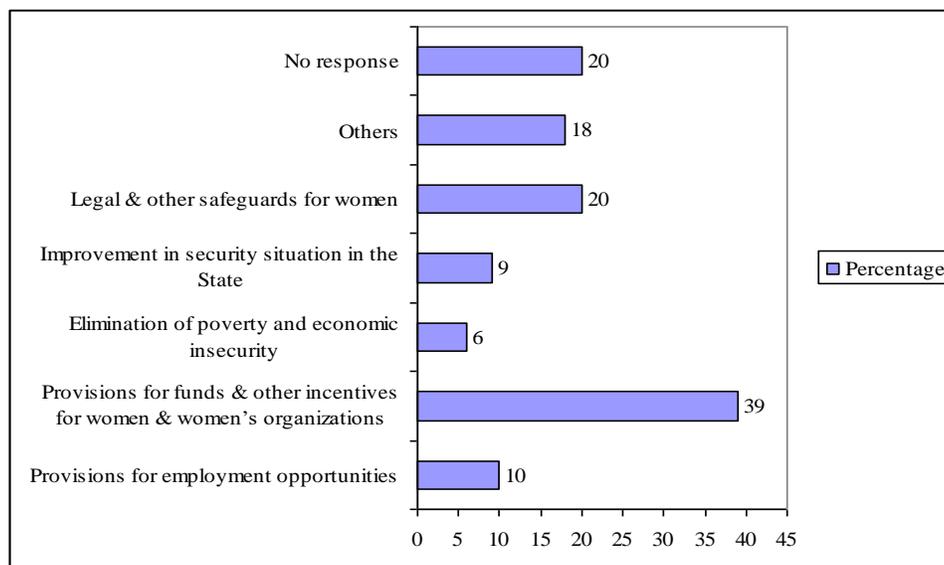
### Steps that government should undertake to encourage women's participation in peace building initiatives

**Table 7.11**

Steps	Percentage
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Provisions for employment opportunities	10
Provisions for funds and other incentives for women and women's organizations	39
Elimination of poverty and economic insecurity	6
Improvement in security situation in the State	9
Legal and other safeguards for women	20
Others	18
No response	20
Total	121

**Chart 7.10**



While Naga and Kuki women organizations and other civil society groups have performed commendably active role in bringing peace to their turbulence affected areas, the response of Meitei civil society groups for restoring peace in Manipur valley though praiseworthy has been hitherto peripheral. Reasons for this glaring difference are as follows:

- ❖ Naga people, by and large, have realised that both insurgency and counter-insurgency have vitiated their society, violated their rights, left them divided along factional and tribal lines, and kept their areas under developed and backward. Meitei people in general also want peace. However, their resolve to this effect is not as captivating as that of Naga people.
- ❖ More than six decades of association of Naga people with politics, economy and other systems of India has convinced many leading Naga opinion makers that some sort of integration with India is not only inevitable but also advantageous for the interest of Naga people. Many Meitei leaders also feel accordingly in regard to Manipur but they are yet to adequately assert themselves.
- ❖ Church leaders are very influential among Naga and Mizo people. These leaders have rendered unparallel service for creating public opinion for peace and for persuading insurgent groups and successive central and state governments for peaceful resolution of problem of insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram. It was mainly due to vision and

perseverance of church leaders that Mizo accord which ended Mizo National Front (MNF) insurgency in Mizoram could be signed, despite deadlocks, on 30 June 1986. No such group has emerged in Manipur valley so far.

- ❖ In recent years Naga Baptist Church, Naga Mother's association and Naga Hoho have consistently made efforts to bring an end to inter tribal and factional quarrels among Nagas and to build up an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation. No Naga insurgent group can now afford to ignore the opinion and aspirations of Naga people as expressed through these civil societies organisations.<sup>64</sup> In Manipur valley Meira Paibis and other civil society groups are yet to acquire such stature.
- ❖ In Naga areas almost all the civil society groups including NMA have worked in concert to persuade insurgent groups and state authorities for peaceful resolution of inter-factional conflicts and insurgency. However, in Manipur valley only Meira Paibis and other women groups are being urged to take initiative for peace. Unless all Meitei civil society groups including political parties whole heartedly and unitedly make efforts, insurgent and state authorities can not be made to take up the dialogue for peaceful resolution of insurgency in Manipur valley.
- ❖ Naga militants have realised that they would never be able to pursue the goal of achieving a sovereign Nagaland or *Nagalim* through violent means. The regional developments such as birth of Bangladesh, China's deviation from the socialist path and the growing relation between India and Myanmar have considerably weakened external support base of the insurgent groups. The anti-terrorist policies pursued by United States and its allies since 11 September 2001 have also made it almost impossible for the liberation movements to achieve their objectives through violent means. These factors apart, the NSCN (IM)'s leadership has also become aware of practical difficulties that Nagaland will have to face in the event of it becoming completely independent of India. Their willingness to negotiate with India should be seen in the light of these internal and external compulsions.<sup>65</sup> Meitei insurgent groups are yet to grasp these realities. External support base for insurgent groups of northeast India will further shrink due to Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) which involves Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- ❖ In 1990s a number of new terrorist outfits came into existence. Some of them emerged in areas till then peaceful. In Manipur valley, which already had a number of insurgent groups, Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) was born in that period. Not only these new groups indulged in violence, the existing ones also stepped up their subversive activities. ULFA, created in 1979, made its presence felt in 1990s. It is believed that NSCN (IM), by way of strategical move, not only helped in creation of new groups but also abetted the existing ones to intensify lawlessness. NSCN (IM) did so to force government of India to negotiate with it for solution of Naga problem. Naga underground movement has been too prolonged, without reaching anywhere near its goal of achieving sovereign *Nagalim*. This has eroded support base of Naga

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<sup>64</sup> H Srikant and C J Thomas, "Naga Resistance Movement and the Peace Process in Northeast India" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi, 2006), p. 365-66.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

underground outfits and made people of Nagaland to settle down as subjects of Nagaland, the 16<sup>th</sup> state of India, created on 1 December 1963. This also accounts for the inclination of NSCN (IM) for negotiations.<sup>66</sup> This process is yet to gain momentum in Manipur.

### **7.8. Scope of Women and Civil Society Groups Peace Initiative**

In view of the potential of Meitei women, there is no doubt that if they so decide collectively and if other civil society groups work in concert with them for this purpose, they can build a strong mass movement for peace.

There is a multiplicity of insurgent groups in Manipur valley. Each group has its own agenda and ideology. There is also communal divide between Meitei Hindu and Meitei Muslim groups. Multiplicity of insurgent groups is indeed a major hindrance for peace process in Manipur valley. Civil society organisations can be of great help in overcoming this hindrance by persuading these groups to evolve a common front. They can also persuade insurgent groups: respect human rights, eschew brutalities and rapacious behaviour and desist from involving children in waging conflict and demobilise child soldiers in their cadres.

No women organisation or any other civil society group can impose a settlement on insurgent groups and state authorities. But they can persuade state and non-state actors in the conflict to ceasefire and take up negotiations in a congenial environment of mutual accommodation to reach an accord for peaceful settlement of the dispute. This process is currently afoot for peaceful settlement of Naga insurgency. This process has already accomplished the task of peaceful settlement of Mizo insurgency in neighbouring Mizoram.

Such negotiations often get mired into deadlocks due to rigid stands and ego clashes of negotiators. Civil society groups can be of great help in sorting out these problems and thereby in facilitating the peace process to remain afloat till its logical conclusion.

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<sup>66</sup> Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality- Ethnicity, Insurgency, Sub-Nationalism in North-East India* (New Delhi, 2002), p.300.

## Chapter 8

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the facts and analyses of the problem of insurgency in Manipur valley and the steps being taken to tackle it, the following conclusions have been arrived at.

- Manipur valley is disturbed due to activities of numerous Meitei insurgent groups and armed gangs of extortionists, smugglers and other miscreants masquerading as insurgents. Each insurgent group has women cadres and child warriors. Multiplicity of these groups is a major hindrance for peace process in Manipur valley.
- Genesis of insurgency in Manipur valley is embedded in history of Manipur. Meiteis are bitter over many historical developments which they perceive as injustices meted out to them. The insurgent groups in the valley are extreme manifestation of this psyche.
- Widespread unemployment, economic deprivation, poor governance, poverty, corruption, extortion, foreign support and threat of partition of Manipur to fulfil Naga demand for *Nagalim* (Greater Nagaland) are the major factors that have created and sustained insurgency in the valley.
- Meitei insurgents' primary objective is to free Manipur from Indian occupation.
- In Manipur valley, due to insurgency administration has collapsed, development activities have been dislocated, corruption is thriving, people are impoverished, quality of life is poor and human rights are routinely violated both by security forces and insurgents. Women are the worst sufferers due to insurgency.
- A two-pronged strategy has been adopted in Manipur for tackling insurgency in the valley areas namely, use of security forces for containing militancy and taking of political and development measures for addressing issues that have created, promoted and sustained insurgency. For settlement of these issues, the Government of India is open to talks within the framework of the Constitution of India with any group that abjures violence. Efforts to bring about negotiated peace in the valley, however, have been conspicuous by their absence.
- Anti-insurgency operations and development activities being undertaken to address the grievances leading to insurgency have not yielded desired results. Insurgency in the valley has become a way of life.
- There is no easy solution for the complex and deep rooted problem of insurgency in Manipur valley.
- There is subdued public resentment against the activities of insurgent groups amongst the people of the valley.

- Meitei women, when the occasion demands, plunge into thick of struggle and have proved that women power has enough punch to bring the stiffest opposition down on its knees. They have rendered yeoman's service in social sphere, exposing human rights violations, fighting drug abuse and creating awareness about HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, it has not been hitherto possible for them to reach leadership positions in political sphere, though the things are slowly changing for the better.
- Women organisations and other civil society groups in the valley want peace. They undertake activities such as peace rallies and marches to vent their desire for peace. These activities, though praiseworthy, are not adequate to build a mass movement for creating climate for peace. They have to exert far more to build and sustain a strong mass movement for peace.
- Considering their past achievements in social sphere, Meitei women have vast potential for public good and can play a very significant role along with other civil society groups in peaceful settlement of insurgency problem in the valley as has been the case in Mizoram and Nagaland.
- No women organisations or civil society groups can impose a settlement on insurgent groups and state authorities. But they can build mass movement for peace, persuade state and non-state actors in the conflict to ceasefire and take up negotiation in a spirit of mutual accommodation and help in overcoming deadlocks as may arise during the negotiations.
- For bringing peace in the valley, simultaneously, rapid economic growth with social justice is essential.

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## Chapter 9

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1. Advocacy and Awareness Programmes

**Need for Concerted Action:** Opinion makers of all sections, including women, should strive to make people of Manipur valley realise that insurgency and counter-insurgency have vitiated their society, violated their rights, created divisions among them and kept their land underdeveloped and backward. Meitei people in general also want peace, but their resolve to this effect is not sufficiently forceful. This resolve has to be made all pervasive and effective to build a mass movement for peace in the valley. For change of current scenario, concerted action of all sections and not merely efforts of women groups is essential. Political activists, scholars and other civil society groups, besides exhorting Meira Paibis and other women organisations for launching *Nupilan* (Women's War) for resolution of insurgency, should also actively work themselves for achieving this objective. It was concerted approach of various civil society groups that has resolved insurgency problem in Mizoram and brought peace in Nagaland.

**Women's Empowerment:** Meira Paibis and other women groups can play a significant role in creating a mass movement for peace in Manipur valley and compelling insurgents and government to take up negotiations for resolution of insurgency problem in the valley. To facilitate women groups to do so, the government, political establishment and different civil society groups should suitably empower women groups by providing them financial support; involving them in consultation process; giving them representation in decision making positions; associating them with schemes for employment generation, social change, rehabilitation and upliftment; and giving due weight to their views.

#### 9.2. Administrative Measures

**Drive against corruption:** Both government and people in general should launch effective drive against corruption with the intention of rooting out pilferage of public money, administrative lapses, lack of financial accountability and unholy nexus at different levels of government.

**Better Coordination with Foreign Countries:** Neighbouring countries should be persuaded more effectively to stop assistance to the Indian insurgent groups, uproot camps of insurgents on their soil, deny the insurgents space for launching operations in India and share intelligence about their activities.

**Better Inter-State Police Networking:** The state police authorities should network with their counterparts at places like Guwahati, Shillong, Coimbatore and Delhi, from where Meitei insurgents have been arrested from time to time, to deny insurgents safe houses at such places.

**Giving State Police Primacy in Counter-insurgency:** State police should be given primacy in operational matters. It does not need special laws like AFSPA. It has necessary powers under

ordinary law of land. Besides, state police, being local, has certain advantages over central forces in operational work. The authors of Project Report on *Insurgency and Special Challenges to policing in India's Northeast: A Case Study of the Tripura Police*, also subscribe to the above view. In this connection they observe as follows; "Nothing in the preceding analysis is intended to suggest that the army and the para-militaries have no legitimate role or function in counter-insurgency. For one thing, these forces are often deployed in situations bordering a collapse of local administration, including local police force, and there is simply no alternative to such an emergency response. Further, geographical and demographic factors, such as terrain and the wide dispersal of populations, may make a conventional police station/ police post based response inappropriate in at least some remote and sparsely populated area of affected states, making military or para-military deployment and operations necessary. Further, counter-insurgency duties in border areas often dovetail with a wide range of other responsibilities best executed by specific CPMFs, such as the border security force (BSF) or by the army. Most contemporary insurgencies, moreover, create a context for multi-force operations, which optimise the strengths of the diverse forces available to the state. What is argued here is that there are certain integral advantages in the profile and structure of state police forces that incline in favour of a police-led response in circumstances where the police has been suitably prepared and empowered in terms of leadership, manpower, equipment, training and orientation. Even in cases where the army or Central Paramilitary Forces play a lead role in the high-intensity stages of a rising insurgency, the restoration of police primacy in later stages is often a precondition for the effective restoration of civil authority in areas where the structure of civil governance has been severely undermined, damaged or even entirely excluded, over an extended period of time."<sup>67</sup>

**Surrender Policy:** Surrender policy, which is intended to motivate insurgents to eschew violence and to come over-ground, needs to be suitably altered. According to Gurudas Das, "Surrender policy, instead of discouraging the unemployed youths to join the bandwagon of insurgency, rather pulls them towards it. If one has to get a job where there is none, if one has to get some state privilege, which is otherwise not accessible, the promised path is to join insurgency and then surrender to receive the rehabilitation package. As there is only carrot and no stick in this policy; it has been encouraging the proliferation of extortion groups in the name of community interest. It is quite lucrative to form such a group, terrorise people particularly trade and business community, earn a handsome amount and then use a safe passage to escape. The extortion groups are often hand in glove with the local power elites who use them as private army, make both material and electoral fortunes and then stage surrender drama to save them."<sup>68</sup>

**Women's Involvement in Peace Process:** Government should make women's organisations and organizations that are working on women's issues a part of every peace effort in order to make the process representative of different views.

**Recognition to Women and Other Organisations:** Individuals and organizations that devote themselves for the cause of peace should be given recognition at the state and national level.

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<sup>67</sup> Project Report on *insurgency and Special Challenges to policing in India's northeast: A case study of the Tripura Police* submitted by the Institute for Conflict management to The Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India ( New Delhi, 2007), pp. 26-27.

<sup>68</sup> Gurudas Das, "War and Peace" in Prasenjit Biswas and C Joshua (eds.) *Peace in India's North East* (Delhi 2006), p.329-330.

Besides honouring people and organizations that strive for peace, it will motivate others to emulate their examples.

### 9.3. Confidence Building Measures

**Preservation of Meitei Interests:** Many Meiteis believe that insurgent groups are necessary for preserving things they consider sacrosanct, protecting their political interests and promoting their economic wellbeing by ensuring for them larger share of funds for investment. The central government should assure Meitei people, both through categorical policy pronouncements and firm deeds, that it values their legitimate aspirations and shall not balkanise/ damage their interests to appease other nationalities and they need not harbour insurgent groups for defending their heritage, rights and interests.

**Withdrawal of Unpopular Measures:** Unpopular law and order measures like AFSPA should be withdrawn to assuage sentiments of civil society and to create proper climate for reconciliation and peace initiatives.

### 9.2. Economic Measures

**Trade and Commerce:** Out of box measures such as facilities for trade with neighbouring countries are necessary for addressing the problems of unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities and backwardness of Manipur. Manipur is remotely located in an isolated corner of India. Its road, rail and air connectivity is poor.<sup>69</sup> In a high level meeting held on 15 September 2008 at Guwahati, the chief minister of Manipur said, “There is an urgent need to develop the existing roads and make them pliable. The condition of NH-39, which is a lifeline of Manipur, is not up to my satisfaction. When I asked corporators to invest in my state, the first thing they asked me is about road connectivity. I have been pressing the centre for long to improve the NH-39 and make it a four-lane highway. Otherwise investors will never come to Manipur.” He also pleaded for a bus service from Imphal to Yangon and Mandalay through Moreh. According to him, once this bus service is opened, it will generate a lot of business. In the same meeting, the Mizoram chief minister argued for road link with Yangon in Myanmar and with countries beyond like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. According to him, these links can usher in massive development in the area because these places are closer to northeast than mainland India.<sup>70</sup>

**Productivity and Industry:** Manipur valley has a sizable potential for improving productivity of its agriculture and pisciculture. There is plenty of scope, both in valley and hills, for development of horticulture and plantation crops, growing of fruits and vegetables. Upgradation of technology, modernization of production process and standardization can give a substantial boost to the traditional handloom industry in Manipur valley. There is also scope for

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<sup>69</sup> Imphal is connected by air with Kolkata and Guwahati. In May 1990, Manipur was connected with rest of India by rail by opening a railhead at Jiribam, which is 225 km from Imphal. Dimapur (Nagaland), which is 215 km from Imphal, is the nearest railhead. National Highway (NH)-39 joins Imphal with Nagaland in the north and Myanmar in the east. NH-53 joins Imphal on the west with Assam and NH-150 joins Imphal with Mizoram in the south. These high ways traverse through difficult hilly terrains. NH-39 is virtually a lifeline for Manipur. It runs from Numaligarh in Assam through Nagaland into Manipur and ends at Moreh on the Indo-Myanmar border. It remains closed either due to strikes or because of law and order problems or due to landslides and other natural calamities for nearly one-third of the year.

<sup>70</sup> *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), 18 September 2008, p. 7.



**3. FAMILY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS**

3.1. Social category (to be filled by interviewer if the respondent cannot reply):

- 1. Scheduled Caste
- 2. Scheduled Tribe
- 3. Other Backward Caste
- 4. General Category

3.2. Religious status:

- 1. Hindu
- 2. Muslim
- 3. Christian
- 4. Others (specify): .....

3.3. What is your profession?

- 1. Housewife
- 2. Government service
- 3. Business
- 4. Private service
- 5. Doctor
- 6. Teacher
- 7. Advocate
- 8. Others (specify): .....

3.4. Does your family possess any of the following?

- 1. Below Poverty Line (BPL) card
- 2. Above Poverty Line (APL) card
- 3. Any other card (Specify): .....
- 4. None of the above

**4. LEVEL OF AWARENESS**

4.1. Do you know that valley area of Manipur is presently affected by insurgency?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Don't know

4.2. If yes to Q. No. 4.1., what in your view are the reasons of insurgency?

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4.3. Are you aware of any steps being taken by the government to resolve insurgency?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

4.4. If yes to Q. No. 4.3., please elaborate the steps

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4.5. Do you consider the above steps adequate?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

4.6. What more needs to be done by the government to resolve insurgency?

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4.7. Are you aware of any steps being taken by non-governmental organizations including women's organizations and individuals to resolve insurgency?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

4.8. If yes to Q. No. 4.7., please elaborate the steps

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4.9. Do you consider the above steps adequate?

1. Yes

2. No

4.10. What more needs to be done by the non-governmental organizations/ women's organizations and individuals to resolve insurgency?

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**5. IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON LIVES OF WOMEN**

5.1. As a woman, are you affected by insurgency in the state?

1. Yes

2. No

5.2. If yes to Q. No. 5.1., which aspect(s) of your life is affected by insurgency? (multiple answers possible)

1. Personal

2. Economic

3. Social

4. Others (specify): .....

5.3. Please elaborate the details of impact of insurgency on your life.

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5.4. As a woman, do you consider yourself more likely to face problems in conditions of insurgency?

1. Yes

2. No

5.5. What in your view is the general impact of insurgency on society?

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**6. ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

6.1. Are you a member of any organisation or women's organization which is working for peace in Manipur?

1. Yes

2. No

6.2. If yes to Q. No. 6.1., please tell its name: .....

6.3. Have you participated in any activity/ initiative organized to bring peace in Manipur?

1. Yes

2. No

6.4. If yes to Q. No. 6.3., elaborate the activity/ initiative in which you participated.

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6.5. Did you face any problems during your participation in the above activity/ initiative?

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6.6. If yes to Q. No. 6.3., who was the organizer of the activity/ initiative?

- 1. Non-governmental organization
- 2. Government organization/ Department
- 3. Political Party
- 4. Local non-political people
- 5. Others (specify): .....

6.7. What in your view is the extent of women's participation in peace initiatives to solve problem of insurgency?

- 1. Very high
- 2. High
- 3. Negligible
- 4. No participation

6.8. Do you think the present activities of organizations/ women's organizations will help in solving insurgency?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**7. SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE ROLE OF WOMEN EFFECTIVE FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

7.1. As a woman, what role do you visualize for yourself for peace in Manipur?

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7.2. Do you think women in the State can play a key role in peace building initiatives?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

7.3. If yes to Q. No. 7.2., what in your view should be done by women and women's organizations of Manipur to bring peace in the State?

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7.4. What in your view should the government do to encourage women's participation in peace building initiatives?

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Date:  
Place:

(Signature of interviewer)

## Format for Case Studies

### **A Study of Role of Women in Conflict Management conducted Human Development Society as Sponsored by Bureau of Police Research and Development, Government of India**

Note: Case study refers to a detailed account of a person's knowledge and experiences in regard to the issues covered in the study. Total four case studies will be conducted. The women selected for case studies may be relatives of the insurgents or victims of insurgency or members of formal organizations (NGOs or associations) or other knowledgeable women.

Under each heading below, different aspects to be covered during the case study are given. Interviewer is free to ask questions on additional aspects that may come up during the course of conducting case study. He/she is required to ask probing questions (like 'why' and 'how' of the matter, rather than 'what'). Interviewer is required to use **separate sheets** for recording the responses.

#### **1. SURVEY DATA**

1.1. Name of respondent: .....

1.2. Profession/ Occupation: .....

1.3. If a member of any organisation, give its name and her position in the organization: .....  
.....

#### **2. LEVEL OF AWARENESS**

Awareness about insurgency in Manipur, views on nature of insurgency, steps taken by government and non-governmental organizations and individuals to solve the problem

### **3. IMPACT OF INSURGENCY ON LIVES OF WOMEN**

Personal experiences with insurgency, impact of insurgency on self and family, impact of insurgency on other women in society, any significant event

### **4. GENERAL IMPACT ON THE STATE**

### **4. ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Involvement with women's organizations/ NGOs or other activities that utilize women's power for peace in Manipur, achievements due to such involvement, problems faced, views on role of women in peace building initiatives in the context of insurgency

### **7. SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE ROLE OF WOMEN EFFECTIVE FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Suggestions should be given to make role of women, women's organizations and other civil society groups more effective for conflict management. As many constructive suggestions as possible may be recorded. Views on role of government in ensuring women's participation in peace process

### **8. Any other issues that may come up during the course of meeting**

#### **Format for Interviewer's Observations**

Note: For each geographical region of valley area, one observation report will be prepared by the pair of interviewers (one male and one female) deputed for the region concerned.

1. General conditions of women (life conditions, status in society etc.) in the region covered by you for interviewing women for this survey
2. Any visible signs of impact of insurgency on women in the region covered by you
3. General conditions of society (conditions of development, law and order situation etc.) in the region
4. Whether the respondents were forthcoming, frank and cooperative in the survey
5. Difficulties faced in filling up the interview schedules
6. Experiences gained by interviewers during the course of interview

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