

SITUATING CONFLICT AND
POVERTY IN MANIPUR

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at understanding the relationship between social conflict and poverty in the context of Manipur where there has been a series of conflicts causing disruption of normal life of the people. The causes of conflict range from inter-ethnic clashes to human rights violations, political instability, and militarization. These conflicts have caused massive destruction, loss of life and property, and large scale internal displacement. The response of the state has mostly followed the path of combining economic packages with more militarization. There has been less significance of the issues of livelihood, displacement and poverty. This study highlights the need to recognize togetherness of the imperatives of economic well being, socio-cultural identity and political participation in addressing the issues involved in the ethnic conflicts and consequential disruptions, displacement and poverty.

Keywords: *Poverty, Conflict, Ethnicity, Identity, Displacement, Ethnic Violence, Insurgency, Culture.*

Situating Conflict and Poverty in Manipur

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and Homen Thangjam*

1 Introduction

The study of the relationship between poverty and conflict is part of a larger social phenomenon. It gives rise to a number of issues in the context of polity, economy, culture and society. The state of Manipur has witnessed a series of conflicts and spates of violence, which have disrupted the lives of the people by rendering many homeless, destitute and displaced. Those worst affected are the women, who have frequently become victims of rape, molestation, sexual abuse, physical torture, etc.

This study is set in the context of a growing realisation that human well-being must be measured using indicators other than those based on economic well-being. Poverty is seen not only as a state of income deprivation but also as a condition in which deprivation spans an entire social, economic and political context.¹ Human development is about the desirable outcomes that should be realised through

¹ The concept of poverty can vary from extreme want of necessities resulting in debility owing to malnutrition, to falling short of comfortable means. In India, poverty has been defined as when an individual fails to earn an income sufficient for the bare means of subsistence. To quantify the extent of poverty and measure the number of 'poor' in the country, the concept of the 'poverty line' has been used. The Planning Commission defines this on the basis of a recommended nutritional requirement of 2435, rounded as 2400, calories per person per day for rural areas and 2100 (rounded) for urban areas. The logic in using the calorie intake as a yardstick of poverty is that the poor spend between 60 and 80 percent of their income on food. In rupees, the poverty line is the midpoint of the expenditure class in which the calorie needs are satisfied (food energy method). On this basis, the cutoff point turns out to be Rs. 228 and Rs. 264 for rural and urban areas, respectively at 1992- to 1993 prices. For a household of five members, the poverty line has been fixed at an annual income of Rs. 13,680 in rural areas and Rs. 15,840 in urban areas.

conventional means of well-being (Rajalakshmi, 2002). These outcomes may not have a direct economic value apart from their enabling properties: they enhance the sense of overall well-being. The three critical dimensions of well-being are: the ability to live a long and healthy life; education – that is, the ability to read, write and acquire knowledge; and command over resources, which is an enabling factor for a decent and socially meaningful life.² These are all affected in a situation of conflict.

1.1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

Since the 19th century, when rigorous studies of poverty began, scholars and researchers have tried to establish a standard yardstick to measure poverty, to apply in all societies. Such efforts resulted in the concepts of ‘absolute poverty’ and ‘subsistence poverty’. One of the earliest studies on subsistence poverty was conducted by Seebohm Rowntree in York in 1899 (Harallambos, 1980:144), who drew a poverty line in terms of a minimum weekly sum of money ‘necessary to enable families to secure the necessaries of a healthy life’ To make it more operational, Drewnowski and Scott (1966) in their Level of Living Index define and operationalise ‘basic physical needs’ in the following way: nutrition, measured by factors such as intake of calories and protein, shelter, in terms of quality of dwelling and degrees of overcrowding, and health measured by infant mortality and the quality of available medical facilities.

Lewis (1959) suggested that the condition of poverty was not necessarily limited to immediate socioeconomic, political and cultural condition, but was part of the inherent socio-psychological, political and economic traits of the poor themselves. This generated a great deal of controversy and debate, which remain far from settled. Engels (1962) put forward that the conditions of the working class defied all rational plan of a city and had a style he described as ‘ashamed’. The emergence of industrialisation meant that the conditions of the

² A composite set of indicators has been estimated from these broad indicators. These are the Human Development Index (HDI), the Human Poverty Index (HPI) and the Gender Equality Index (GEI). The HDI reflects the state of human development for the society as a whole, the HPI estimates the state of the deprived in the early 1980s and early 1990s for all the states and union territories and the GEI reflects the relative attainments of women as against those of men for the same period (Rajalakshmi, 2002).

poor were even more affected. For Engels, in all cases, poverty was about the absence of basic needs in a holistic sense.

Gunnar Myrdal, an economist, contributed an increasingly wide paradigm and inclusive approach to understanding poverty, specifically noting that economic development cannot be comprehended unless it is studied in a broad political and social framework. In the wake of World War II, the dimensions of the world began to shrink; at the same time, there was an increased gap between rich and poor, which initiated a new wave of research on poverty. However, most studies endeavoured to treat the issues of underdeveloped countries (particularly poverty) from the point of view of western political and military interest (in terms of saving these countries from communism) (Myrdal, 1968). The same yardstick used in western societies to measure poverty is not applicable in other developing/underdeveloped countries. To understand poverty in its true sense needs an inclusive approach and a holistic viewpoint.

The concept of poverty can no longer be understood in terms of one variable – inadequacy of food, shelter and clothing. Any comprehensive understanding of poverty requires a broad-based strategy. Poverty will become clearer if we consider the ability of a person to acquire food and other commodities (education, health, justice and human rights) within the prevailing economic, social and legal arrangements, rather than simply focusing on aggregate of food availability or individual ‘purchasing power’. This is the view elaborated by Sen and Drèze (1999). What becomes clear is that poverty and starvation can be seen even when there is no decline in aggregate food.

Therefore, it is not enough to measure poverty in term of money-centric indicators and income levels alone. It is imperative to identify poverty using a multidimensional and holistic approach, since people are likely to be poor for many reasons. Behind this, basic needs not only mean shelter, clothing and food but also include education, health, participation in political processes and relative freedom from exploitation. As such, a better understanding of quantitative indicators (assets, capital malnutrition) is essential (besides income) (Hulme *et al.*, 2003). This is based on the condition that wealth and wellbeing are not identical but the outcome of various factors (loneliness, exploitation, deprivation, injustice, insecurity, fear, etc.)

Taking the above approach into consideration, Mehta *et al.* (2003) define poverty as the sum total of a multiplicity of factors that include not just income and calorie intake but also access to land and credit, nutrition, health and longevity, literacy and education and safe drinking water, sanitation and other infrastructure facilities. The unifying characteristic of poverty in all its manifestations is lack of access to social, physical, economic, political and natural assets.

As noted, the concept of absolute poverty has been widely criticised, as based on the assumption that there are minimum basic needs for all people, in all societies. In reality, such needs vary between and within societies. According to Smith and Townsend (1965: 125), 'it would be difficult to define nutritional needs without taking account of the kinds and demands of occupations and of leisure-time pursuits in a society'. The authors put forward an alternative concept, that of 'relative poverty', stating that individuals, families and groups in the population are in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies to which they belong. A third definition, known as 'subjective poverty', has emerged over time, referring to whether or not individuals or groups feel that they are poor. This is closely related to relative poverty, since in both the poor are defined in terms of the standards of the day. Subjective poverty seems more appealing to some degree, since people act according to the way they perceive and define themselves.

Here, we need to conceptualise the concept of poverty in the case of Manipur. Social scientists participating in a seminar organised at the Madras Institute of Development Studies sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in 1974, 1975 and 1976 accepted a definition of the poor as those 'who lack the minimum requirements of food, clothing, shelter, medical and educational facilities' (see Roy Burman, 1984: viii). This definition could not adequately explain the situation in northeast India in general and in Manipur in particular, as the dimension of conflict was not incorporated. Hence, an attempt to redefine poverty in the context of Manipur should be mindful of the reality of the prevalent conflict. One way of defining poverty in this regard could be those who become poorer as they are displaced, their houses burnt and properties

destroyed, and those who have fled or migrated to the neighbouring villages/regions for survival.

Scholars, human rights organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have conducted many studies on conflict and violence. Often, their attempts to highlight human right violations are limited to counting numbers of casualties. In addition to this, it is important to focus on the socioeconomic security and sustainability of the people, so that such consequences do not generate another form of violent conflict.

Manipur has witnessed a series of ethnic conflicts since the 1960s, hampering developmental activities in the state and leading to the emergence of a new dimension of poverty. Traditionally, Manipur was an egalitarian society and people were relatively equal. The outbreak of ethnic conflicts and institutionalisation of violence in recent times has led to the deprivation of the people.

One group of scholars and writers feels that the crisis is one of conflicting ethnicity and nationalism – a matter ultimately of identities and allegiances. Another group stresses structural relationships, in particular the prevalent political and economic inequality within the region and between the region and the Indian centre. The term ‘step-motherly treatment’, by the centre to different groups, communities and states, has been frequently used.

Dr Suresh Kulkarni (2000) uses a resource perspective to understand the ethnic conflicts of Manipur and to explain ethnic conflicts arising out of material conditions. He notes that groups conflict with each other because they perceive that the distribution of resources is a zero sum game, i.e. one group’s access to resources is a loss of access for another group. This perspective accommodates many other theories of ethnic relations and conflict, which attempt to construe conflict as either a struggle for economic or political power, or for both. The actors in such a competition may be conceived either as ethnic communities collectively, or as elite groups within a given community trying to employ (as the instrumentalist view of ethnicity holds) tribalism or ethnic identity as a mask for their material interest. The resources for which the actors compete include anything that gives them an added advantage in exercising political or economic power – financial packages, seats in elections, recognition of one’s tribe or dialect by the state, control of border trade, media attention,

government jobs, etc. Further, actors in this struggle try to maximise their net resource advantage both in cooperation and competition with others.

In applying such a theory in Manipur, we can explain the crisis as a result of a scarcity of resources. The Naga and Kuki have been nurturing incompatible political aspirations – the Naga demanding the creation of Greater Nagaland (or Nagalim), the Kuki the creation of Kuki State, or a full-fledged revenue district within Manipur. Meanwhile, the Meitei are trying to retain their monopoly in the valley. Each ethnic group is believed to run an underground group; the Naga have the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN); the Kuki have the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the Kuki National Army (KNA) and the Kuki Democratic Front (KDF); and the Meitei have the United National Liberation Front (UNLF). The number of such groups seems to have increased over time. Set in a situation of resource poverty, these ethnic groups believe that distribution of resources cannot be equal. This may have led to the Naga–Kuki clash in Moreh town in 1992, when several thousands of innocent people were killed.

The tension between the Meitei and the hill tribes can also be explained using this perspective. The hill people complain that all facilities and funds are in the hands of the Meitei in the valley and that they have been neglected, discriminated against and subjugated for too long. Similarly, the struggle for power and resources between the Thadou Kuki and the Paite Zomi (both belonging to the Chin-Kuki family) has been a long one. Even before the violent clashes in Churachandpur district in 1997 to 1998, there was evidence of undeclared conflict between them. When the All Paite Students' Union (APSU) and the All Zomi Students' Association (ALZOSA) pressed the authorities in Manipur to change the name of Churachandpur to Lamka in 1982, the Thadou Kuki shied away from the move, even if they did not actually oppose it. Churachand, the name of the last Raja of Manipur, is perceived by most of the inhabitants of the town as a symbol of Hinduised Meitei dominance over them. Lamka is an indigenous word for crossroad. From the viewpoint of the Thadou Kuki, this may have appeared to be an exercise of power by a newly emergent tribe: this may have been an indirect reason for their intra-tribal struggle for resources (Zou, 2000).

A study of the Ethiopian crisis in the 1970s and 1980s led Lantz (1996) to the conclusion that environmental degradation (because there are no other alternatives) can initiate social degradation that might create a context in which the likelihood of social conflict is increased. Likewise, GliECK states that the central question is not whether environmental concerns can contribute to instability and conflict, but when and where such conflicts are most likely to arise (in Zou, 2000). Hazarika (1994) also uses this environmental perspective, while suggesting a means to resolve the northeast crisis in general and that in Manipur in particular. He argues that being too tied up in resolving immediate issues and conflicts can prove futile. Owing to the large-scale practice of *jhum* cultivation, the green cover in Manipur has been depleted over the years. Many huge trees have been cut down and burnt, which has also caused air pollution. Moreover, local brick industries, thriving in the hills of Manipur, are fed using logs felled from the forest, which has sped up deforestation. The relatively high price of liquefied petroleum gas and kerosene oil has meant that many town dwellers in a fast urbanising society depend on charcoal for domestic fuel, which is also extracted from the forest. The process of deforestation has had a disturbing impact on annual rainfall distribution, which has affected cultivation in rural areas without proper irrigation facilities. So, although a major part of the population in Manipur is engaged in agricultural work, cultivation in the hill areas has become very unproductive, generating barely enough to support life. The Government has not been able to provide alternate options of more viable occupations. Such bio-economic conditions can hardly be conducive to social stability in the state.

Yumnam (1999), on studying the crisis of Manipur, cites institutional collapse as the cause of ethnic conflict: ethnic conflict arose because of the failure of the state machinery. The economy was backward and, despite heavy rainfall, the majority of households did not have access to safe drinking water. In such an environment, only two ways to personal wealth and prosperity were apparent: swindling of public money (enjoyed only by Government officials or those with ties to Government); and indulging in clandestine border trade through Moreh Tamu region at the India–Myanmar border. This collapse of institutions led to the present Naga–Kuki conflict (an attempt to gain exclusive control over the Moreh Tamu trade). Another evident result in the valley area has been the sudden emergence of

neo-rich individuals with no appropriate education and aptitude as champions of society. In such cases, people indulge in more corrupt activities in order to acquire more power and prosperity. Another example relates to the recent ceasefire crisis in Manipur, whereby the Meitei have accused the state machinery of inefficiency and criticised power hungry politicians. Lal Dena and Yambem Laba have accused British colonialism of exploiting the people through its 'divide and rule' policies and by sowing the seeds of discontentment among the various ethnic groups of Manipur.

Lokendrajit Singh (1986: 353) explains the crisis of Manipur in terms of modes of production, reproduction and tradition. He states that the situation is characterised by politically motivated demographic attempts, high consumption, low productivity and romantic obsessions with the past, describing Manipur as a place which is 'only partly free'.

1.2 Methodology

This study is divided into seven sections besides the introduction and conclusion. It uses both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include firsthand information, participant observation, person-to-person interaction, feedback and field surveys. Secondary sources refer to available literature and official publications, such as statistics handbooks, statistical and economic abstracts, censuses and five-year plan documents, as well as various journals, newspapers, websites and archives.

In Section 2, the study situates Manipur and its land and people, and describes the ethno-historical profile of the state. Section 3 explains the nature and dynamics of conflict, its intensities and its degree of destruction in Manipur and the role of the state and electoral politics in Manipur. Section 4 looks at the state, developmental discourse and electoral politics. Section 5 studies the socioeconomic conditions of the people, providing a broad picture on patterns of cultivation, the landholding system and the emerging dimension of poverty. Section 6 explores the impact of militarization and the consequential internal displacement of the people, also looking at the emergence of bonded labour and rickshaw drivers as a result of the conflicts and violence. Section 7 speaks about the effects of conflict and violence on women. Section 8 explains the changing trends of

development and poverty, linking this to the relationship between conflict and poverty, and at the same time looks into the various Government plans to eradicate poverty. The conclusion (Section 9) draws all this together and critically evaluates the relationship between conflict and poverty and vice versa.

As stated earlier, the present study attempts to link violent conflict with poverty in Manipur. When focusing on the consequences of violent conflicts, the first thing to look at is how conflict produces poverty. Conflict is a struggle between individuals or groups over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are to assert their values or claims over those of others (Goodhand and Hulme, 1999). It is in this process of conflict that an individual or a group intends to disrupt livelihoods and sustainability as a strategy to neutralise a rival group.

Several studies on northeast India in general and Manipur in particular assume that the current problems of insurgency and ethnic clashes are a part of economic backwardness. While there is a general agreement among scholars that poverty causes conflict, it is more important to discuss the reverse argument. Political statements made by Government suggest that there is no economic development in Manipur because of 'insurgency' and 'violence'.³ This statement is their acceptance of the fact that armed conflicts result in chronic poverty. The extortion of money from business persons, politicians and Government employees and the diversion of development funds to insurgent groups is a main cause of hindered development in the state. The frequent transport blockades (*bandh*), curfew and underground taxation from the line buses, goods trucks and oil tankers has increased the price of essential commodities by many times, particularly affecting poor people. Given this, though, there is a paucity of research on the conflict and its resulting consequences in terms of chronic poverty.

³ Recently, State Police arrested some Government officials on charges of being involved in deducting a percentage from the salaries of government employees to pay in tax to insurgent groups. It is also well known that every employee in Manipur pays tax to the underground groups, negotiated at 5 to 10 percent of their salaries. See Lama (2003) and Sandham (2005).

2 Conceptualising conflict and poverty in Manipur

2.1 *Land and people*

Nestled between Assam and Myanmar, the little state of Manipur with its fertile valley has been a melting pot for many ethnic groups. The hills surrounding the Imphal Valley (Imphal is the capital of Manipur, located in the valley) have for a long time been the home of Mongoloid races like the Naga and the Chin-Kuki.

There are six ethnic groups in the valley. Of these, three (the Meitei, Loi/Chakpa and Yaithibi) are regarded by others as indigenous or original settlers; the others (the Brahman (locally known as Bamon), Bishnupriya and the Manipuri Muslim (locally known as Pangal)) are considered immigrants from outside (Shah, 1994). The Meitei are the dominant group in the valley. Other groups or communities include Punjabis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalese, Anglo-Indians and people from south India. In Manipur, they are locally known as Mayangs, which means 'outsiders'. At present, many tribals also inhabit the valley, who can easily trace their roots to the hills. Therefore, for easy evaluation, the people of Manipur are divided into two – those living in the plains (the valley society) and those living in the hills (the hill tribes).

In the hills, there are 33 scheduled tribes, broadly divided into two groups – Naga and Kuki. Some of the important Naga tribes of Manipur are the Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring and Anal, among others. The important tribes of Kuki are the Haokip, Thadou, Kipgen and Vaiphei, among others. Although tribes like the Gange and Hmar Paite are very close to the Kuki, they prefer to call themselves by their respective names or Zomi.

The present state of Manipur has a total area of 22,327sq km, which constitutes only 0.7 percent of the total land surface of India. Manipur merged with the Indian Union on 15 October 1949, having been under British rule as a princely state since 1891. In 1972, in response to growing aspirations, Manipur was made a full fledged state.

According to the Census of India 2001 (DCO, 2001), the total population of Manipur is 2,388,634, divided into nine districts. Population density on average is 107 persons per sq km. The state lies between 23.83° and 25.68° latitude north and 93.03° and 94.78° longitude east. Manipur is mostly a hilly region. About 10 percent of

the area is plains and the rest is covered by hills. The average proportion of the population below the poverty line in Manipur is 28.54 percent, as compared with the national average of 26.10 percent. Having made significant progress in the field of education in recent years, the state has an average literacy rate of 68.87 percent (male = 77.87 percent and female = 59.70 percent, respectively). The state sex ratio is 978 females per 1000 males. Agriculture is the main occupation. Paddy is the main crop, followed by maize. Other agricultural products are cabbage, potatoes, chillies, oilseeds and sugarcane. The details of human development in Manipur are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Human development fact sheet, Manipur

S.no.	Indices	State	India
1	Human Development Index value, 2001(of 15 major states)	NA	0.472
2	Human Development Index rank, 2001 (of 15)	NA	
3	Human Development Index value, 1991	0.536	0.381
4	Human Development Index rank (of 32)	9	
5	Human Poverty Index, 1991	41.63	39.36
6	Human Poverty Index rank (of 32)	21	
7	Gender Disparity Index value, 1991	0.815	0.676
8	Gender Disparity Index rank (of 32)	5	
Demography			
1	Total population, 2001	2,388,634	1,027,015,247
2	Sex ratio, 2001	978	933
3	Dependency ratio, 1991	10	12
4	Dependency ratio rural, 1991	10	13
5	Dependency ratio urban, 1991	11	10
6	Sex ratio children 0-6 years, 2001	961	927
Income			
7	Per capita net state domestic product (at 1993-1994 prices, Rs.), 1998-1999	7014	9647
8	Persons in labour force, 1999-2000 (%)	54	62
9	Females in labour force, 1999-2000 (%)	35	39
10	Population below poverty line, 1999-2000 (%)	29	26
Education			
11	Literacy rate, 2001 (%)	69	65

12	Male literacy rate, 2001 (%)	78	76
13	Female literacy rate, 2001 (%)	60	54
14	Rural literacy rate, 2001 (%)	65	59
15	Rural male literacy rate, 2001 (%)	75	71
16	Rural female literacy rate, 2001 (%)	56	47
17	Urban literacy rate, 2001 (%)	80	80
18	Urban male literacy rate, 2001 (%)	89	86
19	Urban female literacy rate, 2001 (%)	71	73
20	Gross enrolment ratio Class I-V (6-11 years), 1999-2000	94	95
21	Boys – gross enrolment ratio Class I-V (6-11 years), 1999-2000	102	104
22	Girls – gross enrolment ratio Class I-V (6-11 years), 1999-2000	87	85
23	Teacher–pupil ratio (primary school), 1999-2000	21	43
24	Functional literacy		
Health			
25	Life expectancy at birth, 1992-1996 (yrs)	NA	61
26	Infant mortality rate, 2000 ¹	23	68
27	Under 5 mortality rate, 1991	39	94
28	Under 5 mortality rate, male, 1991	37	91
29	Under 5 mortality rate, female, 1991	43	101
30	Maternal mortality rate, 1998 (per 100,000 live births)	NA	407
31	Total fertility rate, 1998	2	3
32	Children underweight (-2SD), 1998-1999 (%)	28	47
33	Houses with access to safe drinking water, 1991 (%)	39	62
34	Houses with access to toilet facilities, 1997 (%)	12	49
35	Hospital beds available per 1000 persons (all areas),	1991	0.79
36	Monthly per capita consumption of expenditure (Rs.), 1993-1994	195.48	
37	Rural monthly per capita consumption of expenditure (Rs.), 1993-1994	190.65	
38	Urban monthly per capita consumption of expenditure (Rs.), 1993-1994	200.31	

Note 1: Infant mortality rate is per 1000 live births.

Source: DCO (2001).

Table 2: Population below poverty line by states, 1999-2000

States/union territories	Rural No. of persons (lakhs)	% of persons	Urban No. of persons (lakhs)	% of persons	Combined No. of persons (lakhs)	% of persons
Andhra Pradesh	58.13	11.05	60.88	26.63	119.01	15.77
Arunachal Pradesh	3.80	40.04	0.18	7.47	3.98	33.47
Assam	92.17	40.04	2.38	7.47	94.5	36.09
Bihar	376.51	44.30	49.13	32.91	425.64	42.60
Goa	0.11	1.35	0.59	7.52	0.70	4.40
Gujarat	39.80	13.17	28.09	15.59	67.89	14.07
Haryana	11.94	8.27	5.39	9.99	17.34	8.74
Himachal Pradesh	4.84	7.94	0.29	4.63	5.12	7.63
Jammu & Kashmir	2.97	3.07	0.49	1.98	3.46	3.48
Karnataka	59.91	17.38	44.49	215.25	1.4.40	20.04
Kerala	20.97	9.38	20.07	20.27	41.04	12.72
Madhya Pradesh	217.32	37.06	81.22	38.44	298.54	37.43
Maharashtra	125.12	23.72	102.87	26.81	227.99	25.03
Manipur	6.53	40.04	0.66	7.47	7.19	28.54
Meghalaya	7.89	40.04	.034	7.47	8.213	33.87
Mizoram	1.40	40.04	0.45	7.47	1.85	19.47
Nagaland	5.21	40.04	0.28	7.47	5.49	32.67
Orissa	143.69	48.01	25.40	42.83	169.09	47.15
Punjab	10.20	6.35	4.29	5.75	14.49	6.16
Rajasthan	55.06	13.74	26.78	19.85	81.83	15.28
Sikkim	2.00	40.04	0.04	7.47	2.05	36.55
Tamil Nadu	80.51	20.5	49.97	22.11	130.48	21.12
Tripura	12.53	40.04	0.49	7.47	13.02	34.4
Uttar Pradesh	412.01	31.33	17.8	30.89	529.89	31.15
West Bengal	180.11	31.85	33.38	14.86	213.49	27.02
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.85	20.55	0.24	22.11	0.82	20.99
Chandigarh	0.06	5.75	0.45	5.75	0.51	5.75
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.30	17.57	0.33	13.52	0.33	17.14
Daman & Diu	0.01	1.35	0.05	7.52	0.06	4.44
Delhi	0.07	0.40	11.42	9.42	11.49	8.23
Lakshadweep	0.03	9.38	0.08	20.27	0.11	15.60
Pondicherry	0.64	20.55	1.77	22.11	2.41	21.67
All India	1932.43	27.09	670.07	23.62	2602.50	26.10

Notes: Poverty ratio of Assam is used for Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura. Poverty ratio of Tamil Nadu is used for Oondicherry and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Poverty ratio of Kerala is used for Lakshadweep. Poverty ratio of Goa is used for Daman & Dui. Urban poverty ratio of Punjab is used for both rural and urban poverty of Chandigarh. Poverty line of Maharashtra and expenditure distribution of Goa are used to estimate poverty ratio of Goa. Poverty line of Maharashtra and expenditure distribution of Dadra & Nagar Haveli is used to estimate poverty ratio of Dadra & Nagar Haveli. Poverty ratio of Himachal Pradesh is used for Jammu & Kashmir 1993-94. Urban poverty ratio of Rajasthan may be treated as tentative.

Source: Government of Manipur (2002a).

This study proceeds along the following lines. First, an understanding of poverty and conflict in Manipur is discussed. So far, poverty causing conflicts have not been observed in Manipur. Even the ethnic clashes between the Naga and Kuki for the domination of Moreh (border town) were, by and large, considered part of the larger dimension of armed opposition movement. Second, various types of conflicts prevalent in Manipur are described in brief, with a central focus on militarised violence.

Importantly, popular appeal to higher studies is a relatively recent phenomenon in rural areas of Manipur.⁴ This new development has been the result of an awareness of the positive effects of education, but has come about at a time of declining employment opportunities, deepening economic problems and widening inequality of provisions and facilities between the privileged and less privileged, at both national and regional level. This situation is more challenging in the context of hill districts (except Churachandpur, which has a higher than average literacy rate) because of their poor literacy rate compared with the valley districts (see Table 3).

Table 3: Literacy rates for state and districts, 1981-2001

S. no.	State/district	1981	1991	2001
	Manipur	49.66	59.89	68.87
1	Senapati	36.05	46.04	50.47
2	Tamenglong	44.22	50.16	58.56
3	Churachandpur	54.34	58.17	74.67
4	Bishnupur	39.23	54.94	71.59
5	Thoubal	41.13	52.47	67.90
6	Imphal West*		73.01	80.61
7	Imphal East*		68.05	76.38
8	Ukhrul	49.94	62.54	68.96
9	Chandel	39.51	46.68	57.38

Notes: The census year of 1981 is taken as the base period because the literacy rate starts from the age of five years for the census years of 1951, 1961 and 1971; in 1981, the age was raised to seven years and above. Under this new system, children of six years and below are treated as illiterate even if the child is going to a school and has picked up reading and writing.

** Literacy rates for 1991 for Imphal West and Imphal East are based on provisional recast population figures because of bifurcation after the 1991 census.*

Source: DCO (1991; 2001)

⁴ Initially, the primary purpose of education was to serve the colonial interests, and did not go beyond elementary education (Shanti Devi, 2001; Misra, 2000).

Table 4: Rural and urban distribution of population, 1961-2001

Year	Population	Urban	Rural
1951	577,635	2862	574,773
1961	780,037	34,121	712,320
1971	1,072,753	141,492	931,261
1981	1,420,953	375,460	1,045,493
1991	1,837,149	505,645	1,331,504
2001 (prov.)	2,388,634	570,410	1,818,224

Source: Government of Manipur (2002a).

Most of the people of Manipur live in villages. The rural population is about 76.12 percent of the total population (see Table 4). Agriculture is the main occupation. A very obvious reason for the backwardness of the economy of Manipur is the geographical location. The physical distance from the political, financial and industrial heartland of the country has had its repercussions, made worse by the continuous ethnic conflicts. It is in this setting that this study tries to locate the dynamics of ethnic conflicts and sustainable development.

2.2 Ethno-historical profile of Manipur

It would be difficult to study Manipur without forming a general idea of the diversity of the state. As we have seen, the Meitei are numerically dominant in the valley, whereas the hills surrounding the valley have been for a long time the home of the tribal Naga and Kuki. The Constitution of India recognises 33 scheduled tribes among these two ethnic groups.

Valley

The six ethnic groups identified in the valley, as we have seen, are: 1) the Meitei; 2) the Loi, or scheduled castes; 3) the Yaithibi, or the outcastes; 4) the Brahman (Bamon); 5) the Bishnupriya; and 6) the Manipuri Muslims (Pangal). Each has a distinct consciousness of its identity, with a particular notion about their historical past.

The Meitei

There are two distinct opinions among the Meitei with regard to their origin, namely Hindu descent and tribal origin. British administrators and scholars were inclined to trace Meitei origin in the

Manipur valley to an agglomeration of Naga–Kuki Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes surrounding the valley. Bhattacharya (1908: 17) says that ‘Meitei claims they are descended from *Babhruvahana*, the son of Arjuna of Mahabharata’. From the mythological point of view, Chatterji (1974) finds an Aryan strain in the Meitei community.

Hodson (1908: 4-5) opined that ‘excepting Pakhangba, all other names are Sanskritic in nature’, thereby suggesting that tales of royal clan origin are compromised by Hindu influence. His position was supported by Gait (1926: 270), who maintained that ‘the degraded Brahmans who served Manipuris (the Meitei) invented a legend that the people were the descendants of Arjuna’. Rejecting the claim of Hindu descent, Pemberton (1835) concluded that the Meitei are the descendents of Tartar immigrants who came through the northwest borders with China. Ethnologically, Hodgson (1853) felt that the Meitei belonged to the Moi section of the Tai (Moitay is the combined name of the Siamese Tai and the Kachin Chinese Moy). Pemberton and Hodgson criticised these ideas, stating that the socio-political influence of the Shan rather than that of the Tai has had a greater impact on the culture and politics of Manipur. Damant (1875) noted that from the peculiarities found in the grammar of all the three languages, namely, Naga, Kuki and Manipuri, as well as Lushai, were derived from the same stock. Hodson stated that the structure and vocabulary of the Meitei language is like those of Tibeto-Burman races. Grierson (1903: 7) places the Meitei language in the Tibeto-Burman family under the Kuki-Chin group of languages. He remarks that ‘in vocabulary and structure, the Meitei language agrees to that of the language of the Kuki groups on the hills of Manipur’. In sum, a close connection between the Meitei and the hill tribes is evident in the writings of the above authors in linguistic context.

McCulloch (1859) and Damant (1875) deal with the traditions prevalent in both the Meitei and the Naga–Kuki tribes of the hills. They concluded that the Manipuris (referring to the Meitei) are a conglomeration of several distinct tribes, including the Meitei, Khaba-Nganba, Changlei, Angom, Khuman, Luwang and Moirang, who came from different areas. At one time, the Khuman were the most powerful, at another the Moirang. Ultimately, the Meitei subdued all the others and gradually the name Meitei became applicable to all the tribes that settled in the valley. Based on these traditions, Brown (1874) arrived at an interesting speculation that the Manipur valley was at one time

covered entirely by water. He speculated that, when even a small part of the valley skirting the hills became suitable for cultivation, the hill tribes bordering the area used to come down to cultivate it, returning to their mountain homes after reaping the harvest. Gradually, when the land size increased, some of them settled permanently in the valley. Various tribes thus settled in different parts of the valley, came into contact with others and, after a struggle for supremacy, amalgamated to constitute an ethnic group.

McCulloch (1859), Johnstone (1896) and Brown (1874) on the basis of dress, and Hodson (1908) from the point of view of other aspects of culture, especially marriage rules, found homogeneity between the Meitei and the Naga–Kuki tribes of the hills. The Meitei coronation ceremony was performed in Naga dress; the existence of Yum Chau, a great house in the Naga fashion in the palace and the dress of boat race participants were examples that the Meitei had retained some of the customs of the hill people.

Hodson noted that, 200 years previously, with regard to internal organisation (system of exogamous decisions), religion, habits and manners, the Meitei were like the hill people (1908). Legend suggests that, at one time, the Meitei even used to marry Naga girls. Gradually, ‘they evolved from a primitive culture into a comparatively higher civilization, coming in contact with the Shan, Burmese, British and lastly, the Hindus’ (ibid: 11-12).

As there is a lack of historical material, it is difficult to trace the real nature of the connection between the Meitei and the hill tribes. According to L.I. Singh (1963: 14-15), ‘on the basis of legends, various Manipuri authors emphasized the point of admixture of difficult groups as well as the immigrants within the Meitei community’. The community has been variously described as Meitei, Munnipoorees, Munnipuries and Manipuries, but the local people belonging to the community call themselves either Meitei or Meetei.

During the past four decades or so, Meitei intellectuals have taken two distinct positions on their tradition: the Gouriya (Vaishnavites) and the Sanamahi (non-Vaishnavites, or followers of the indigenous Meitei religion). The Gouriya interpret their traditions as related to Hinduism and the Sanamahi try to define their own indigenous tradition as unaffected by Vaishnavism.

The Loi/Chakpa

There are also different opinions regarding the origin of the Loi/Chakpa. Legend indicates that they formed an independent tribe that once ruled the valley. According to Brown (1874), the Loi are not pure Manipuri, but appear to be descendants of the Moirang, one of the original tribes, which formerly occupied the valley to the south. They were originally independent but were overcome by the Meitei; Loi means 'subdued'. All the descendants of so-called low-caste people, other than Musalmans, seem to be designated Loi.

Another version, propagated by the Meitei, is that the Loi are the original Meitei in terms of custom and behaviour. With the passage of time, the Meitei have become more and more Hinduised, whereas the Loi have preserved most of their indigenous traditions. To separate out the Loi, the Meitei often attribute certain occupations to the Loi/Chakpa, such as poultry farming and distilling, among others. The Loi are also regarded by the Meitei as a tributary group, one which used to pay tribute to the Meitei kings. Dun (1886) identifies the Loi as the people of the five villages in the west and northwest of the valley close to the hills, engaged in silk culture.

Grierson (1903: 43), using the vocabulary of the Loi published by McCulloch (1859) showed that the 'Loi vocabulary apparently has some connections with the Naga dialects especially with those of eastern sub-groups'. Brown (1874: 14) also noted that 'the Manipuris are frequently degraded to Loe as a punishment. In this case, should it not be remitted, which it usually is after a time, the punishment descends to the wife and family of the culprit who becomes Loees.'

The Yaithibi

In all cultural respects, the Yaithibi are the Meitei. However, they do not call them Meitei, because they now deem them socially outcaste, on account of their grave offences, such as marrying of near relatives, like sisters, stepmothers, etc. The Yaithibi concede that they are outcastes but do not accept Meitei reasons for their excommunication. They state that injustice shown to them by the king and some of his favourites meant that they were compelled to accept their present low position. In fact, the literal meaning of the term Yaithibi is 'bad luck'. Another version describes a tension between King Garibaniwaj (1709 to 1748) and his son Prince Ajit Shai over a

girl called Laishram Ningol Thambal Nganbi, whom both father and son desired. In order to punish the girl for being accessible to both, she was exiled after Garibaniwaj died, along with her relatives. In addition, all criminals who were to be executed were sent to Shugnu village, where the wife of the headman could prevent executions if she wanted; those pardoned were sent to the Yaithibi area, so they could not have any social connection with their parent society. In this process, they became untouchables, grouped in one village, Waithou, situated near their present village, Thoubal Khunou (J.R.K. Singh, 1965). Some British writers, particularly Brown (1874: 13), mention that ‘the Eithibee are the exiled people and they used to perform the scavenger’s job in the palace only for the raja and his family. He labelled them as Mehter Caste.’

The Brahman (Bamon)

According to Bamon Khanthok, a text in Manipuri narrating the story of Brahmins in Manipur, the Brahman came to Manipur early on but it was during Kyamba’s regime that they were employed as *pujaris* (priests) and astrologers. According to Jhalajit Singh (1965: 91), ‘after acceptance of Vaishnavism by the Meiteis, the Meitei kings of different periods brought them into Manipur valley from various parts of India’. The Brahman, locally known as Bamon, who served as the priestly class of Hinduism, came to Manipur after the adoption of Hinduism as a state religion in 1714 (I. Singh, 1986). Some of these outsiders brought women along with them, but most of them married Meitei girls or kept them as mistresses after they had settled in Manipur valley. The offspring of the latter were given the social status of the Brahman. Kabui (1991) concludes that the Brahman married Manipuri women but formed a separate social group outside Meitei society. What is remarkable is that outsider Brahman adapted to Manipuri society but preserved their superiority and exclusivity, remaining a category by themselves even today.

The Bishnupriya

There are two distinct popular views in terms of identifying the Bishnupriya: the Meitei view, also subscribed to by all other non-Bishnupriya of the valley, and the viewpoint of the Bishnupriya themselves. The main contention of the Bishnupriya viewpoint is that they are the autochthon Kshatriyas of the valley. The proof of their claim, they state, is that they are the descendents of Babrubahan

of the Mahabharata. The Bishnupriya also claim that they are the first settlers of the valley, as worshippers of Vishnu; later, the Meitei king acquired great power and drove them out of the country, although they returned to settled there. They say that when the Meitei king along with his retinue accepted Vaishnavism, he invited them to teach the Meitei the Hindu way of living. Thus, they claim to be the carriers of a superior culture.

The main contention of the Meiteis is that the Bishnupriya are outsiders and late settlers in the valley, coming to Manipur from the west. They do not consider them indigenous, saying that their original god Vishnu is not an indigenous god. They use the word Mayang to denote those who came to the valley from the west, especially through Cachar.⁵ In support of their views, they quote M.K. Singh (1952: 81-82), a Bishnupriya writer, who holds that ‘the Bishnupriyas are the descendents of Arjuna and other 23 Kshatriya Bansas of western India’, suggesting that the Bishnupriya belong mainly to Chandra Bansa.

The Meitei also consider the Bishnupriya to be the carriers of an inferior culture, although they say that the Meitei king at first mistook them to be a culturally superior group. When it was detected that the culture of the Bishnupriya was of inferior quality, they were allotted the work of foraging for the royal staff. Based on language and terminology, different writers classify the Bishnupriya as outsiders and immigrants from the west. Grierson (1967: 20) came to the conclusion that ‘they came into Manipur from the Aryan speaking locality’. Gait (1926) stated that the group consists of descendants of the Dom and other Bengalis of low caste.

Dun (1886: 14) noted that ‘the Mayangs are the descendants of the Hindus who originally immigrated from the West’. He also mentioned that the chief of the Mayang was called *Kalaraj* or *Mayang Ningthau* (western chief). McCulloch (1859) designates them grass-cutters. According to Allen (1905: 53), ‘they are the descendants of

⁵ Mayang is now used to mean outsiders, especially those belonging to the Indian mainstream. Originally, this was not so: the Meitei used different terms for different groups of people (Awa for Burmese, Takhel for Tripuris, Mayang for Cacharis and so on). The connotation of these terms gradually lessened and only the term Mayang persisted, now bringing together all outsiders. In this sense, the Bishnupriya, Brahman and the Pangal (Muslim) are called Mayang.

120 Hindu families of different castes who were brought into the valley by Garibanewaz in the later half of the 18th century’.

The Pangal

The Meitei consider the Pangal outsiders. They are said to have settled in Manipur since the beginning of the 17th century (L.B. Singh, 1991). They came in 1606 as invaders in favour of Prince Sanongba, the brother of King Khagemba (ibid) but were defeated at the hands of the Meitei king, with more than 1000 Muslim soldiers captured. Afterwards, Muslims came and settled there permanently. The king allotted them specific areas (Lilong, Keirao, Sekta, Yairipok, Hafta, etc.) within the valley. They were given local Manipuri women in marriage and were allowed to settle in the state. These women did not accept the Islamic rule of *purdah* and continued to enjoy considerable freedom in the socioeconomic sphere (Chaki-Sircar, 1984). These Muslims were also given specific *yumnaks* (lineage) but could not be absorbed into the Meitei *salai* structure (clan). However, they adopted Meitei as their mother tongue. Brown (1874: 15) noted that the ‘Mohammedan population is almost entirely the emigrant Bengalese, chiefly from the districts of Sylhet and Cachar. They are a mixed population.’

The Pangal are believed to have come from the districts of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) and Cachar (now in Assam). Khan (1972: 8) notes that ‘the Mohammedan came from the land of Bangla’. Originally, they were known as Bengal, as they are mostly Bengalis; in the course of time, this term was corrupted term to Pangal. The educated cautiously call them Mussalman.

Johnstone (1896: 221) stated that ‘formerly they had to prostrate themselves before the Raja like other subjects. After they had made a representation that this was against their religion, Chandra Kriti Singh (1834-1886) excused them from doing that and allowed them to offer Salam instead. Brown (1874: 15) noted that ‘they chiefly followed the trades of gardening, turning, carpentry, and poultry and they also served as sepoy’. He also mentioned that nearly all buglers and drummers attached to the Raja’s army were Mussalman; further, they had the reputation of being honest and hardworking. McCulloch (1859: 14-15) wrote that ‘the Mussalmans are divided into four principle divisions – sepoy, gardeners, turners, and potters. The Kazi was appointed by the Raja to govern the Mussalman on account

of the service he might have done for the Raja as a manual servant'. Khan (1972: 9) mentions that 'some of the contributions of the Manipuri Mussalman to the Valley are transplanting of paddy plant, carrying of *dolai* [palanquins], *hidak thakpa* [smoking tobacco], paper making and so on'. In the course of time, they became conscious of their religion and identity and thus the first masjid in Manipur was built in 1873, centuries after their settlement (Varma, 1999). According to Khannan, the system of *purdah* was introduced much later (1988). Devi (1988: 155-158) claims that 'historians of Manipur consider [Muslims'] contribution to socio-cultural enrichment as valuable but the fact remains that they remained outsiders to the orthodox Hindu single caste society of the Valley'.

Hill tribes of Manipur

The hills of Manipur are a land of the tribes. In the Census of 2001 (DCO, 2001), there were 29 scheduled tribes; now, there are 33. All these can be further categorised into two groups – the Naga and the Kuki. Some of the important tribes of Manipur are the Kabui (Rongmei) Naga, Tangkhul Naga, Mao Naga, Thadou, Hmar, Paite and Maring, among others. The population figures are given in the tables below.

The Naga of Manipur

It is not clear how the name Naga was derived, although there have been several attempts to trace its etymological origin. Elwin (1959: 4) pointed out that 'the derivation of the word is still obscure'. It is hard to accept the theory of Naga originating from the Sanskrit *nag*, meaning snake: no snake-worshipping cult existed among the Naga, although the fear of pythons was present. Some writers give it the meaning of 'mountain', and the people who move in the high hills. In the second century, Ptolemy referred to a group of people called the Nagalogue living in the hills of the eastern region (see Kabui, 1988). Others have identified Nagalogue with the present Naga, meaning 'naked people' in Sanskrit (see Barua, 1933; Choudhary, 1959; Gerini, 1909; McGrindle, 1885). In the middle ages, the chronicles of the Ahom of Assam refer to the Naga who fought against them. Hutton originally thought that the term came from the Assamese Naga (pronounced Noga), probably meaning mountain; Waddel felt Naga meant 'hill men' (Kabui, 1988: 18). Although there is no final word on this, it is certain that these names were given by

outsiders to mean a group of people horizontally classified into more than two dozen tribes.

The Naga occupy the north, northeast and northwest hills of Manipur. Hodson (1911: 1) argued that ‘a line drawn across the map following the Kubo valley road via Aimole and joined to the Cachar road which traverses the western hills from Bishnupur in Manipur to Giri Ghat on the western boundary of the state separates the Naga area from the Kukis’. According to Panchani (1987), the different groups widely scattered in the area. In fact, they are divided into different tribal and linguistic groups. Every tribe has a unique political organisation of its own; from the pure democratic of the Angami Naga to the autocratic rule of the Angs of the Konyak Naga, from the gerontocracy (Tatar) of the Aos to the semi-republics of the Zeliangrong Naga. In their manners and customs, there are great outward variations. The Zeliangrong, Tangkhul and many others bury their dead; the Konyak expose their dead. They have had diverse beliefs, customs, rituals and modes of worship, but most are now Christian and present a picture of unity in diversity, feeling that they are a homogenous racial group. This sense of unity was first provided by the British, who gave them a common name and identity. Kabui (1995: 34) notes that ‘the Naga national feeling or Naga Nationality is a product of British colonialism, Second World War, modernization and the Naga Movement for political sovereignty’. As such, the Naga nationality represents an ongoing search for ethnic identity.

Table 5: Populations of scheduled tribes of Manipur, 2001

S. no.	Tribe	Population
1	Aimol	2643
2	Anal	13853
3	Angami	650
4	Chiru	5487
5	Chothe	2675
6	Gangte	15,100
7	Hmar	42,690
8	Kabui	62,216
9	Kacha Naga	20,328
10	Koirao	1200
11	Koireng	1056

12	Kom	15,467
13	Lamkang	4524
14	Mao	80,568
15	Maram	10,510
16	Maring	17,361
17	Any Mizo (Lushai)	10,520
18	Monshang	1635
19	Moyon	1710
20	Paite	44,861
21	Purum	503
22	Ralte	110
23	Sema	25
24	Simte	7150
25	Sahte	311
26	Tangkhum	112,944
27	Thadou	115,045
28	Vaiphei	27,791
29	Zou	19,112
30	Unspecified	75,768
Total		713,813

Source: DCO (2001)

The tribes of Manipur, now grouped under the Naga, are among the earliest inhabitants of Manipur. Usually, they are known by their names. Tribes like the Kabui (Rongmei), Mao, Maram, Thangal, Tangkhul and Maring, which have a strong tradition of common migration with the northern Naga of Nagaland on ethnological, linguistic and actual grounds, have been called Naga. Some tribes, like the Anal, Moyon, Monshang, Lamkang, Tarao, Chothe, Chiru, Koireng and Kharam, have a linguistic affinity with the Kuki-Chin and cultural identification with the Naga. In the words of Roy Burman (1984: 19), they are more attracted towards the Naga ideologically and have accepted the Naga identity.

The Kuki of Manipur

According to Panchani (1987), the Kukis are also called Khongjais. They are distributed widely in Manipur, occupying the southwest, south and southeast hills, covering about 4000 square miles in the

Table 6: Tribal population of Manipur by district, 1981

S. no.	Tribe	Senapati	Tamenglong	Churachandpur	Chandel	Imphal	Ukhrul	Manipur
1	Aimol	86	4	269	1196	306	1	1862
2	Anal	5	3	328	8780	230	2	9348
3	Angami	18	-	511	7	30	-	566
4	Chiru	2064	959	401	2	316	1	3743
5	Chothe	3	-	208	1429	45	1	1686
6	Gangte	347	1225	5417	427	472	5	7893
7	Hmar	138	632	25,650	290	2492	14	29,216
8	Kabui	3702	11,638	2486	9	8158	14	26,006
9	Kacha Naga	3265	9409	10	1	69	-	12,754
10	Koirao	918	-	-	-	1	-	919
11	Koireng	762	-	-	1	184	-	947
12	Kom	2602	169	3309	999	2750	-	9829
13	Lamkang	-	-	-	3413	39	1	3453
14	Mao	49,942	12	6	17	697	40	50,714
15	Maram	6468	1	8	6	61	-	6544
16	Maring	1359	-	67	9863	617	3	11,909
17	Any Mizo (Lushai)	298	-	4608	833	367	20	6126
18	Monshang	3	-	-	1113	23	-	1139
19	Moyon	2	1	-	1559	80	-	1642
20	Paite	202	17	29,155	431	1045	109	30,959

Contd...

21	Purum	418	2	17	3	6	3	449
22	Ralte	1	3	103	-	1	-	108
23	Sema	1	5	10	2	4	3	25
24	Simte	200	209	4526	38	62	-	5035
25	Sahte	4	-	267	8	2	1	282
26	Tangkhul	6566	27	317	450	3330	68,440	79,130
27	Thadou	23,060	4359	17,196	5232	1502	5116	56,465
28	Vaiphei	3057	581	11,026	152	349	296	15,461
29	Zou	1	3	9708	2150	706	8	12,576
30	Unspecified	163	-	652	19	197	106	1191
31	Total	105,655	29,259	116,254	38,430	24,141	74,238	387,977

Source: DCO (1981).

districts of Churachandpur and Tagnoupal and the Sadar Hills in north Manipur.

Kuki means to the immediate neighbours of Bengal and Tripura 'hill people' or 'mountain dwellers' (Soppitt, 1893: 2). John Shakespeare, a great authority on the Kuki and the Lushai, wrote (1912: 1) that 'the term Kuki is not recognized by the people to whom it is applied'. Historically speaking, the first reference to the Kuki was made in 1777, when these tribesmen attacked British subjects in Chittagong (Reid, 1893). The term Kuki is not a very old one, and was applied arbitrarily by British administrators, who had a hazy knowledge about the group. Pemberton (1966) refers to them as *Khongjuees*.

Maharaja Nara Singh allowed Kuki migrants to settle in the hills in the 18th century (McCulloch, 1859). They were later recruited to Manipur's armed forces. Maharaja Chandrakriti of Manipur (1850 to 1886) had a very close relationship with them. Before 1891, as Manipur was an independent country, the British did not have the opportunity to carry out direct administration, which led to confusion over the identity of these tribes. The British also invented names like Old Kuki, to differentiate them from recent Kuki migrants; this term was applied to other Manipuri tribes that had a linguistic affinity with the Kuki (Brown, 1874; Dun, 1886). Shakespeare (1912: 11) concluded that 'Old Kuki' and 'New Kuki' were misnomers: 'this classification was based on their linguistic and cultural affinities and the difference in the period of their migration to their present habited without looking into the differences in their land ownership system, polity and their relationship with other tribes of Manipur'. Among the so-called Old Kuki are tribes like the Moyon, Monshang and Lamkang, in Manipur since the first century (O.B. Singh, 1966; Yaima, 1967); the Tarao, Chiru and Chothe, who were already tribute-paying tribes Manipur in the 12th century (Chandrasekhar, 1968); and the Kharam and Koirang, who were in Manipur around the 14th century.

There are other ethnic groups, locally known as Mayang. These are the immigrants, such as the Punjabis, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalese, Marwaris and those from South India, etc.

Table 7: Population of Manipur state by community, 2001 (provisional)

S. no.	Community	Population
1	Meitei*	1,361,521
2	Meitei Pangal	167,204
3	Tribal	713,813
4	Other	146,096
5	Total	2,388,634

*Note: * Here, Meitei include the Loi/Chakpa, Yaithibi, Brahman (Bamon) and Bishnupriya. As per the 2001 Census of India, the Meitei constitute nearly 57 percent of the state's population; the Meitei Pangal (Muslims) nearly 7 percent; tribal communities nearly 30 percent; and others migrating at a later time just over 6 percent.*

Source: DCO (2001).

3 Understanding conflict in Manipur

Conflict is an inevitable and embedded feature of social systems and a major source of change in society. Ethnic conflicts are manifested in varying degrees and intensities. The consequences are often seen in the economic deprivation of some groups of people.

3.1 Types of conflict in Manipur

In the context of Manipur, we can classify conflicts into three types:

1) Intra-ethnic conflict: Here, the conflict is within an ethnic group, such as that between the Kuki and Hmar in 1960 and that between the Thadou Kuki and Paite Zomi in 1997 to 1998, within the generic ethnic group commonly known as the Chin-Kuki. The issue of nomenclature was the basis of these conflicts.

2) Inter-ethnic conflict: Here, the conflict is between two or more ethnic groups, such as that between Naga and Kuki tribes in 1992 and subsequently between the Meitei and the Pangal in the valley in 1993.

3) State versus people: Here, the conflict is directed against the state.

The Indian army, including the Assam Rifles, the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Manipur Police, is currently engaged in fighting against armed rebels in Manipur. To strengthen the counterinsurgency system, a unified command was formed in January 1997. In addition, the Government of India is seeking the cooperation of neighbouring countries in its internal security policy. For example, in 2003, India provided logistical and strategic support to the 6000-strong Bhutanese army to flush out Indian separatist outfits from its kingdom.⁶ Likewise, Indian military instructors are training the Burmese army in joint operations along the border, and the Indian Government has developed a diplomatic understanding with the Government of Bangladesh to stop use of the latter's soil by militants for the anti-India campaign.

The major insurgent groups in Manipur are the People's Liberation Army (PLA), United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) (two factions), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), People's United Liberation Front (PULF) (Pangal based), Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki National Front (KNF), Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (two factions), etc. Most of the outfits cover other states in terms of their operational domain.

3.2 Genesis of conflicts in Manipur

Intra-ethnic conflicts

The first ethnic clash was unleashed between the Kuki and the Hmar in 1960 on the issue of nomenclature. Both belonged to a wider Chin-Kuki tribe but the problem occurred because of a disagreement on the exclusive use of the term 'Kuki'. The consequence is that the Hmar tribe currently prefers to call itself 'Hmar' and not 'Kuki'. This marked the beginning of modern forms of conflict in the state, by which we mean the extension or spill-over of conflict to a wider area, increase in the degree of destruction and use of automatic weapons. Mass media can contribute to this extension, mobilising

⁶ King Jigme of Bhutan said that there were about 20 militant camps in his kingdom, which shares a long frontier with the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. Bhutanese officials estimate that about 3000 rebels belonged to three groups.

tribes involved. The traditional role of the village chieftainship is replaced by that of state actors. Such conflicts can be the product of assertion of identity, arising out of revivalism or a move to create a larger 'ethno-identity'.

Kuki-Zomi conflicts

This conflict was caused by an attempt to reunify the Kuki and Zomi people, using the term 'Zomi' and disowning the name 'Kuki'. The Zomi nomenclature is accepted by the Zou, the Simte, the Vaiphei, the Paite and the Tedim-Chin tribes; the Thadou-speaking groups of tribes deny it and want to keep the term 'Kuki'. The armed factions of the KNF(P)⁷ forced the Zomi to accept the name 'Kuki', justifying this by stating that the term 'Zomi' is a misnomer. This led to intra-ethnic conflict between the Thadou Kuki and the Paite Zomi.

Thadou Kuki-Paite Zomi clash, 1997 to 1998

Intra-ethnic conflict on nomenclature re-erupted within the Chin-Kuki: the Thadou Kuki and Paite Zomi, who share a common cultural and linguistic heritage, were again the main contenders. The issue continues to roll on today.

The trigger of the conflict is contested, but the killing of ten people of the Paite Zomi by the KNF on 24 June 1997 in Saikul village is the officially accepted reason in the Final Peace Accords signed by both sides (Zou, 2000). Relations between the KNF and the ZRA had been tense even before this. It was reported that the KNF had earlier attacked the ZRA at Tripathi, 1 km from Churachandpur, and that there was a shootout between the two parties, but the event of 24th June brought the matter to a state of perpetual conflict. The incident made the Paite Zomi more violent: the killing led to violence in many other areas. After outbursts in Churachandpur town, violence soon engulfed all the other parts of the district in a matter of a few days. According to the Inter-Church Peace Committee (1988), more than 450 lives were lost; 6,000 houses were burnt or destroyed; and the value of lost properties was estimated at Rs. 50 crore.

⁷ The KNF has two factions: KNF(P = president) and KNF(MC = military commandos).

Inter-ethnic conflict

Naga–Kuki clash, 1992 to 1995

In early May 1992, ethnic clashes arose between the Naga and Kuki in the town of Moreh, on the border between India and Myanmar, in Chandel district in southeast Manipur. The Kuki are the dominant tribe in Moreh. One of the main sources of livelihood is smuggling of narcotics, arms or contraband goods. According to Thomas (1994), about 6 kg of heroin is smuggled into Manipur every day. Nearly half is consumed in Manipur alone; the rest is spread across the country and even to neighbouring countries. It is reported that the Indian Security and Paramilitary Forces have benefited from such illegal activities in the form of bribes and commissions. Many armed opposition groups are also said to have benefited in the form of tax (or extortion). According to one version, the violence started when some of the Kuki tribes living in the villages of Chandel district refused to pay tax to the NSCN, on the grounds that they did not subscribe to Naga nationalism.⁸ The Kuki living in Naga areas had been paying so-called house tax to the NSCN since its inception (Shimray *et al.*, 1993). Whatever the cause, the fact is that both groups wanted to maintain their *de facto* rule in Moreh. Zou (2000: 13) gave three reasons for the clash: 1) to obtain control over monetary support from smugglers; 2) to procure arms and ammunition; and 3) to gain easy access to border crossing into Myanmar and Southeast Asia.

According to available sources, on 3 June 1992, Mr Onkholet Haokip, belonging to a Kuki group, was killed in a shootout between the KNA and NSCN near Moreh. The KNA claimed that he was an innocent villager whereas the NSCN argued that he was a KNA volunteer. After this incident, many Naga villages in and around the region were alleged to have been served a 'quit notice' by the KNA. The district Superintendent of Police visited the spot on 9 June to assess the situation, followed by a ministerial delegation led by the then Deputy Chief Minister, Shri Rishang Keishing, on 14th June. They appealed to both communities to maintain peace and restore normality. The State Government posted contingents of Manipur Rifles

⁸ The NSCN is an armed Naga organisation working for the cause of the Naga. At present, the Government of India and the NSCN are holding talks on a ceasefire agreement.

in Naga villages in and around the conflict zone as a precautionary measure. But the Kuki were determined to take on the NSCN, and violence continued to mount. All peace talks failed and on 13th July, a mass exodus of Naga civilians began.

In no time, the ethnic flare-up spread to other districts of Manipur. The Naga attacked several Kuki villages in Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul districts. What followed was a story of retaliations and counter-retaliations, in an endless and vicious cycle of violence. This continued throughout 1993. Over 880 lives were said to have been lost on the Kuki side alone (P.S. Haokip, 1998). According to a memorandum of Kuki-Inpi (Manipur, Assam and Nagaland), the apex organisation of the Chin-Kuki, submitted to the Prime Minister of India on 19 January 2001, over 900 people were killed, 350 Kuki villages were burnt, 50,000 people were internally displaced and many more were subjected to severe hunger and disease (Shimray *et al.*, 1993). Similarly, a memorandum submitted by the Naga Baptist Church Leaders' Forum to the Prime Minister on 15 June 1993 claimed that 20 Naga villages were burnt, 17 villages were totally uprooted and more than 7,000 persons were internally displaced. It was reported that victims were shifted to poorly made camps without adequate basic necessities. What was more surprising was that the State and Central Government tried to resolve the conflict using military means. In September 1993, the Central Government released an additional grant of Rs. 5 crore for the modernisation of the Manipur Police and another Rs. 6.5 crore to raise another battalion of the Reserve Police for the state. Five battalions were airlifted to Manipur to deal with the situation (*ibid*).

A fact-finding team of the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) pointed out that the oft-biased involvement of the army could not be ignored. There were tales of Kuki actors meeting authorities, agencies and army generals, and receiving donations from State and Government ministers. Manipur was placed under 'President's rule' on 31 December 1993; the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 (AFSPA) and other such laws were reinforced.⁹ However, unfortunately, the State Government turned a blind eye to the problem of internal displacement.

⁹ Such laws give more power to state armed forces, curtailing the basic rights of individuals and groups.

Meitei–Pangal clash, 1993

Historically, the Meitei came into contact with the Pangal when the Pangal fought in the Meitei king's army against his own brother (L.B. Singh, 1991). They are now considered inferior by the Meitei. On 2 May 1993, an incident took place between three extremists and a gun-runner of the Pangal community at Lilong Bazar in Thoubal district of Manipur. The dispute was about a monetary transaction over a gun. Lilong is in the eastern outskirts of Imphal city, and the Pangal are numerically dominant. The altercation was said to have been the immediate cause of the clashes between the Meitei and Pangal, which claimed about 100 lives within a short time span. Although the clashes erupted in Thoubal district, most of the killings were reported in Imphal city. Many people fled to neighbouring villages and areas. Violence was also reported in Samurou, Mayang Imphal and Paobitak in Bishnupur district, Canchipur, Kawkta and Heirangoithong. The Chief Minister of Manipur charged the underground People's Liberation Army (PLA) with engineering the communal clash.

State versus People

The ceasefire crisis, 2001

The Naga are dominant in the four hill districts (Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel and Senapati) but feel that they are suffer discrimination. According to K.S. Paul Leo, President of the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of all Naga residing in Manipur, 'all facilities and funds are concentrated in the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley. We have been neglected, discriminated against and subjugated for too long by the Meiteis. We are fed up with continuous harassment and neglect. The time has come now to allow the Nagas to decide their own destiny. We feel we cannot be part of Manipur any longer. The Meiteis should accept the reality. This indeed is a separatist movement' (Mazumdar, 2001).

The initiative for peace talks towards the Indo-Naga Ceasefire was first taken in 1995 by the Prime Minister of India and the collective leadership of the NSCN. Subsequently, the Prime Minister met the NSCN, followed by regular meetings between Government emissaries and the NSCN. The ceasefire had some visible impacts in terms of the reduction of casualties. Initially, it mentioned no specific areas

but was later clarified as applying to the present state of Nagaland only.¹⁰ This became a bone of contention, preventing the ceasefire from taking firm root. The NSCN complained of a breach of the ceasefire; the Government of India denied this since the ceasefire was restricted to Nagaland alone.

The signing of the Indo-Naga Ceasefire ‘without territorial limits’ between the central Government of India and the NSCN on 14 June 2001 at Bangkok was a big blow for the Meitei, who saw this agreement as a recognition of the long-standing demand for a Greater Nagaland, or Nagalim. There was heavy protest: the protesters (mostly Meitei) turned violent and burned down the official residences of many members of the legislative assemblies of Manipur, including the state assembly building. Roads were blocked and, as a result, the supply of food grains, oil and petroleum, toiletries and basic goods and all lines of communications were severely affected. Prices went up drastically. Instead of ushering peace in the state, the ceasefire resulted in massive violent reactions and finally 18 civilians lost their lives on 18 June 2001.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

There have been mass struggles against the state with regard to the implementation of the AFSPA. Although there are no official records on the destruction and loss of property, it is evident that the state has been brought to a standstill through protest rallies, *bandhs*, strikes and curfews. This issue needs more research (the Review Committee instituted by the Central Government has not yet submitted its report).

4 State, developmental discourse and electoral politics

Manipur became a Part C State of the Union of India in 1949. From the accounts of British authors and other historians, the Manipuri people were politically active, although in a somewhat traditional fashion. However, politically, Manipur has a history of unstable government. The merger of the princely state of Manipur and the

¹⁰ The NSCN is demanding the integration of all Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The Naga are also found in present day Myanmar. The NSCN is known to have a presence in all these areas. Nagaland (as opposed to Nagalim) refers to present-day Naga areas only.

Union of India did not bring about genuine democracy as expected. The transformation of the political system was far from meeting the aspirations of the people. Instead, with the attainment of statehood, a new form of political dependency was developed: 'Delhi is there to decide our fate'. An intricate form of neo-colonialism operated: defection of ministers; operation of money and muscle power in elections; lack of a party base; lack of party loyalties; overdependence on central leadership; etc.

Ever since it attained statehood in 1972, there have been nine Chief Ministers and as many as eight President's rules. The first occasion of this was when, in 1972, the ruling party at the Centre (Congress) interfered with the functioning of the first State Government, led by the Manipur People's Party (MPP), and imposed President's rule in the state in 1973. The last direct intervention of the Central Government was seen in 2001. Even though the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won only six seats in the 2000 elections, its strength increased when 20 others defected to it from other political parties. The BJP was then the single largest party and thus wanted a ministry led by its leader. This meant that the incumbent Chief Minister would have to step down in favour of the BJP, which was not acceptable. Even with outside high-level interventions, the crisis was not resolved. In a no-confidence motion, assembly members belonging to the BJP, with two exceptions, voted against the motion and played a crucial role in toppling the Government. When other options to form the ministry failed, Manipur was again brought under President's rule in June 2001.

Most of the major national political parties, such as the Indian National Congress, the BJP, the Communist Party of India (CPI), Janata Dal (United), (JD(U)), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), etc., are active and well known in Manipur. The national political parties like Congress, the BJP and JD(U) are not only popular but also have a wide social base, in both valley and hill districts. The left is yet to make its presence felt in the hill districts, apart from a few followers in the south (Churachandpur).

There are also many regional parties playing an active role in the electoral politics of Manipur. The MPP is one of the oldest regional parties in the whole of the northeast, although its social base is limited to the valley, probably because of the Meitei-centric and chauvinist

functioning and outlook. The Federal Party of Manipur (FPM) is another popular regional political party with a wide social base in both valley and hill districts. Other regional political parties are the Naga National Party (NNP), the KNF, the Manipur National Conference (MNC) and the Democratic People's Party (DPP). The NNP and KNF are found in their respective areas. The other two are found in the valley. The DPP, MNC and NNP are yet to be recognised by the Election Commission (EC) of India.

Table 8 shows the latest state assembly election candidates (2002). The elections were held in two phases, in the plains and hills, respectively. There were 368 candidates, with 244 in the plains (first phase) and 124 in the hills (second phase).

The Indian National Congress manifesto included: restoration of peace and order; measures to limit overdraft; infrastructure improvement; reduction of disparity between the plains and the hills; measures to end corruption; measures to bring development at grassroots level through democracy; provisions for security along the national highways; conversion of Manipur University into a central university; etc. The MSCP manifesto stressed the preservation of territorial integrity and peaceful co-existence. The BJP promised improvements in the economic condition of the people; timely disbursement of money to the state; good governance; solutions to the power problem; transparency in financial matters; no partiality in dealing with underground organisations; condemnation of human rights violations; and the removal of the Assam Rifles from Kangla (the erstwhile king's palace). The NCP promised improvements in the financial health of the state and an economic package from the centre, also prioritising horticulture, agriculture and animal husbandry. Almost all the political parties vowed that they would protect territorial integrity, one of the political significant developments of the time. The DPP stressed human rights whereas the NNP called for 'the emotional integration of the Nagas'. Table 9 shows the final tally.

Manipur is passing through one of its most critical phases, characterised by political instability, general tension and social unrest. Political instability and social disturbance have left deep imprints on the social, intellectual and economic life of the state. The institutions of governance and administration are dogged by corruption and

Table 8: Contesting candidates in assembly elections of 2002, by party

S. no.	Party	No. of contesting candidates		Total
		1st phase	2nd phase	
1	Congress	40	18	58
2	FPM	33	15	48
3	BJP	26	20	46
4	Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP)	33	9	42
5	Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)	18	15	33
6	Samata Party (SAP)	16	15	31
7	Manipur National Conference (MNC)	17	6	23
8	DPP	21	2	23
9	CPI	16	0	16
10	MPP	12	2	14
11	JD(U)	5	2	07
12	NNP	0	5	05
13	Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)	1	0	01
14	Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP)	1	0	01
15	Lok Shakti (LS)	0	3	03
16	Independent	5	12	17
	Total	244	124	368

Source: Manipur Online, 2002.

Table 9: Results of the eighth assembly elections, 2002

Party	No. of seats won
Congress	20
FPM	13
MSCP	7
CPI	5
BJP	4
SAP	3
NCP	3
DPP	2
MPP	2
MNC	1
Total	60

Source: Manipur Online, 2002.

unresponsive to people's needs. Development, peace and security are at stake and have taken a backseat. People are increasingly losing hope and confidence in the governing system. Governmental institutions have come to regulate the lives of the poor and common people in an exploitative way. This has led to economic and material improvements for a few and impoverishment for the majority. Amid all these problems, the Government appears to have lost political will and purpose. The symptoms of instability loom large, law and order show little scope for improvement and insurgency seems to have come to stay.

5 Changing socioeconomic conditions in Manipur

5.1 *Traditional cultivation patterns*

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Manipur. This has made land become a part of life for every villager. Whoever does not possess a piece of land usually does not have any status in society.

In Manipur, we can divide use of land into two types. People in the hills by and large practise slash and burn or *jhum* agriculture, whereas those in the valley are mostly settled cultivators. The agricultural methods and technologies adopted in the valley are relatively better than those in the hills. Most of the farmers in the valley are not only equipped with agricultural implements of improved quality but also have developed a system of maintaining large numbers of livestock in a small area of land.¹¹ Farmers in the valley have established cooperative farming, which is not only successful for rice but also helps maintain large numbers of cattle for agricultural activities (K.B. Singh, 2002a). This system of cultivation allows even the landless to enjoy arable land for grazing purposes and has made every villager relatively secure in socioeconomic terms.

Manipur, like the rest of the northeast, is prone to cycles of famine, which usually occur every five to ten years. The most recent came about in 2003 in the western district of Manipur (Tamenglong). In

¹¹ In colonial times and even after, cattle constituted the most important export items in Manipur. In 1906 to 1907, out of a total export value of Rs. 5,68,335 the value of cattle constituted Rs. 4,68,457, i.e., 82.43 percent of the total. See L.L. Singh (1998).

times of (this kind of) famine, in order to secure a food supply, many people, particularly the Chin-Kuki tribes, developed an economic system known as *anntang-pham*, meaning 'handful of rice'. The system is also practised widely in many other states of the northeast. It is a system of collection and distribution of rice to the local people. Usually, one person collects a handful of rice from every household and stores it in a box. The same is collected every week and stored in the community granary. This same practice is now used also by the church.

Another interesting aspect of the traditional socioeconomic system popularly practised among the Meitei in the valley is *marup* (literally 'friendship association'). Marup is a type of cooperative savings and credit institution. It has become one of the most important economic institutions catering to needs at the time of death, marriage, birth, etc (K.B. Singh, 2002b). This helps promote the traditional egalitarian society and creates a strong economic bond among the people.

In addition, there is a shared labour system among the farmers in order to help them pay taxes in time. This is known as *khutlang* and is rendered to each other reciprocally, as well as being used widely in other spheres of life, thereby reducing the emergence of poverty. The traditional concept of 'communal ownership' of land and other natural resources has given a lifeline to the poor. Legally, landholdings belong to the owners, but during the agricultural season only. Everybody can have access in the recess period. The poor can fish from paddy fields, fields are common grazing grounds after the harvest and certain herbs (*peruk*) can be gathered either to consume or sell. Rivers, ponds and forests belong to the state but anyone can use them to sustain their livelihood.

Therefore, poverty as currently defined is a recent phenomenon in the context of Manipur. This does not mean to say that social inequality was not there in the past. However, the social inequality of the past was based primarily on services to the State (King).¹² This

¹² *Lallup* and *loipot* were services to be rendered to maintain the traditional state of Manipur. The former demanded that every able-bodied male from the age of 16 to 60 years offered service to the state for ten days of every 40. In return, he received one *paree* of land (approximately 2.5 acres). The latter was a form of tributary service rendered to the state by the Loi and tribal communities. For details, see Brown (1874) and Hodson (1908).

was based on the skills possessed by the subjects required for the maintenance of the state. In this traditional economic system, the lowest in the social hierarchy was a *meenai*, which means 'slave'.

5.2 Traditional landholding system

In pre-colonial Manipur, all the land belonged to the State, with the King distributing land for services rendered by his subjects. Anyone rendering military service, *lallup*, received one *paree* of land (approximately 2.5 acres) for cultivation. This implies that hardly anyone was without land in the traditional landholding system. Even widows had the right to retain half the *paree of* land to support the family. This land was not transferable. In the wake of the colonial administration and the subsequent introduction of the *patta* system in 1892, everyone received the opportunity to own their land, which could be inherited or sold (see L.L. Singh, 1998). This system was one of the major factors leading to increased landlessness in the colonial period.

Recently, a gradual increase in population pressure and in the traditional practice of equal distribution of parental land to the male offspring has been observed in Manipur, which has caused fragmentation of landholdings and a consequent decline in the average size of landholdings in the valley.¹³ In 1990 to 1991, average size of operational holdings (cultivated area) was only 1.23 ha, and 48.29 percent of all cultivators had less than 1 ha of operated area (see Table 10). The sudden decrease in land area among marginal farmers is evidence of the emergence of many landless people and indicates the existence of a large amount of economically poor farmers (N.M. Singh, 2001).

5.3 Emergence of a new class of poverty: Rickshaw pullers

It could be argued that the main cause of poverty in Manipur is more of a political than economic nature. Frequent internal displacement of those unskilled in activities other than agricultural leads to limited options: such people are compelled to become daily

¹³ There is no system of joint families among the Meitei. Traditionally, a son who gets married and has a child sets up a separate nuclear family. This system is called *tongan-chaba*. Land is distributed equally among sons; the daughter has no such right until and unless she is divorced and living in her parents' home.

Table 10: Number of landholdings and size of operational area over time

Category of landholdings and sizes of land (ha)	1985-1986			1990-1991				
	Landholding		Operational area (ha)		Landholding		Operational area (ha)	
	Persons	%	Area	%	Persons	%	Area	%
Marginal (below 1.00)	67,314	48.18	36,552	21.05	68,598	48.29	37,820	21.61
Small (1.00-1.99)	48,225	34.51	66,211	38.13	49,062	34.53	67,135	38.37
Semi-medium (2.00-3.99)	21,093	15.10	54,477	31.37	21,452	15.10	54,892	31.37
Medium (4.00-9.99)	3038	2.17	15,524	8.94	2,916	2.05	14,611	8.30
Large (10.00 and above)	55	0.04	873	0.50	43	0.03	523	0.30
All sizes	139,725	100	173,637	1.24	142,071	100	174,981	1.23

Source: Government of Manipur (1999).

wage labourers. Those who migrate to other villages/regions that are relatively peaceful become bonded labourers. In urban areas, the manifestation of the new poverty is that those with no alternative ultimately become rickshaw pullers, once considered the occupation only of the Muslim community in Manipur. Internally displaced members of the Meitei, Kuki and Naga have resorted to rickshaw pulling. Singh (2004) finds that, out of all rickshaw pullers in Manipur, the Meitei constitute more than 45 percent, the Kuki 7 percent and the Naga 4 percent. The rest are Muslims and other immigrants. This is a clear indication of the emergence of the 'new poor' among these ethnic groups.

Table 11: Age group and number of rickshaw pullers in Manipur

S.No.	Age group	No. of respondents	%
1	13-18	1	1.43
2	19-24	8	11.43
3	25-30	19	27.14
4	31-36	24	34.28
5	37-42	10	14.29
6	43-48	5	7.14
7	49 and above	3	4.29
8	All the category	70	100.00

Source: Based on interviews with 70 rickshaw pullers in Manipur (Singh,). Singh, Kh. Bijoy Kumar. (2004). Interviews conducted in June-July 2002, Imphal.

Table 11 shows that the majority of rickshaw pullers in Imphal are between 25 and 36 years old. There is more societal pressure on this age group to maintain their family, which is one of the main reasons for them resorting to this occupation. Those rickshaw pullers who are unmarried and below the age of 25 years are compelled to take up the job because there is no other way for them to earn a livelihood.

To add to their woes, the state has failed to provide employment for internally displaced persons. At present, more than 30,000 people are involved in rickshaw pulling, which constitutes the single largest employment in the state after agriculture.¹⁴ The sheer size of the

¹⁴ Officially, there are only 6,600 rickshaws in Imphal and 15,000 in the state. However, Government statistics are very unreliable, for various reasons. Various experts put the number at double this, as many rickshaws are not registered.

rickshaw pulling means of livelihood has important implications for the state economy. On average, each family has five dependents. This means around 150,000 people in the state are directly dependent on the rickshaw economy. This number is much higher if we consider those who are directly or indirectly dependent on this sector, such as rickshaw mechanics, rickshaw renters, rickshaw garage renters and rickshaw producers.

Reasons for opting for rickshaw pulling

Another important reason for taking up rickshaw pulling is landlessness. As noted earlier, these people are either small farmers or landless workers, forced to migrate to nearby cities or town for a better life. Table 12 shows this clearly: out of 70 rickshaw pullers, nearly 45.71 percent do not own land at all and another 38.57 percent own only less than 0.5 acre. Only 1.43 percent own more than 1.5 acres, which is mostly joint property.

Table 12: Land ownership by rickshaw pullers in Manipur

S. no.	Area of land (acres)	No. of pullers		Total no. of rickshaw pullers	Average %
		Owned by pullers only	Owned jointly by family		
1	Landless	32	-	32	45.71
2	00-0.5	7	20	27	38.57
3	0.5-1.0	3	6	9	12.86
4	1.0-1.5	-	1	1	1.43
5	1.5-2.0	-	1	1	1.43
6	2.0 and above	-	—	0	0.00
7	All classes	42	28	70	100.00

Source: Singh (2004).

Today, the rickshaw sector sees continuous harassment from the people and the state authorities. The Manipur Government does not recognise rickshaws as a means of public transport. There have been problems almost daily, since the state authorities have adopted a policy allowing neither right of movement nor parking space for rickshaw pullers. In this way, this useful means of transport has become one of the most unprotected sectors. Government policy has not only led to worsened economic conditions for rickshaw pullers but has also made them vulnerable to harassment. Meanwhile, the people consider

the profession low and have many prejudices against those involved in it. Many accuse drivers of traffic violations, congestion, cheating, drug trafficking, pollution and slum growth. Rickshaw pullers often cover their faces while pulling in order to disguise their identity, since society has no regard for this profession.

Box 1: Banning of liquor: Nightmare of tribal communities

Mantak is a small village in Kakching sub-division of Thoubal district, Manipur. This village belongs to the Kom tribe of Manipur and has around 130 households. Traditionally, the people were engaged in distilling liquor as the main source of livelihood. They produced liquor not only for their cultural practices but also for sustenance. They also used to supply liquor to many surrounding villages.

In 1991, various organisations, local clubs and insurgent groups started *bandh* to prohibit liquor in the state. Eventually, the State Government declared Manipur a dry state. In addition, militants gunned down six villagers and shot many people who were seen drinking.

This has severely affected the economy of tribal groups and was carried out with complete disregard for their traditional occupation and rights. The tribals and Loi communities, whose traditional occupation was distilling liquor, were the worst affected. Since most were landless and unskilled, they had no other means of survival, so had to resort to rickshaw pulling. Many villagers from Mantak went to nearby towns like Kakching and became rickshaw pullers. It has been reported that there are more than 50 rickshaw pullers from this village in Kakching alone.

Source: Singh (2004).

This issue becomes critical when pullers do not receive ownership rights. Being new immigrants in the city, these rickshaw pullers have no opportunity to arrange a place to park their rickshaw at night. Therefore, they hire a rickshaw from renters, who usually own more than 20 such rickshaws. More than 25 percent of their total income goes to the rickshaw renters. Hiring a rickshaw is also not easy for a new immigrant in the city, as they need a guarantor who is known to the rickshaw renter.

Those who cannot hire a rickshaw become daily wage labourers. Today, there are hundreds of such people in and around the *keithel*

(women's market). As they have nothing to produce and sell, their labour becomes their commodity.

In addition to those described above, many educated youth resort to this occupation as there are limited avenues for them to obtain employment in other sectors. The prevalent situation of underemployment is a factor in the emergence of the new class of poverty.

Living conditions of rickshaw pullers

The income of rickshaw pullers is low, varying from season to season and place to place. It also depends on the density of rickshaws in a particular place and the working hours of the puller. Most importantly, income depends on the socio-political condition of the state, which frequently experiences economic blockades imposed by various communities or organisations (seen in more detail below). During blockades, most rickshaw pullers have no income. On average, a rickshaw puller earns about Rs.105 a day. As most of them have families (with an average of five dependents), it is very difficult for them to save. A survey of 70 rickshaw pullers in June – July 2002 (Singh 2004) revealed that only 13 percent of the total number could save a small amount. The prevailing socio-political uncertainties have worsened their economic conditions.

Moreover, since rickshaw pullers are mostly not registered, they are compelled to bribe the municipal authorities, especially traffic controllers. Most rickshaw pullers do not have valid licenses, so the authorities impose heavy fines on them. Another economic burden is faced when pullers have to spend on frequent depreciation charges (wear and tear). Most roads are not metalled and are damaged owing to frequent floods and lack of proper drainage, so rickshaws need regular repair. Willingness to carry more passengers at a time for quick money adds to this problem. Maintenance grants for roads and bridges (2000 to 2005) are shown in Table 13.

Whenever pullers have to go far they have to buy meals, meaning more expenditure. Those who stay in rented rooms face a double burden. The working environment is unhealthy, with no or few medical facilities, so pullers are prone to disease.

The socioeconomic problems of the rickshaw pullers can be summed up as follows.

Table 13: Maintenance grants for roads and bridges, 2000 to 2005

State	Road length (km)	Rs. (lakh)
Arunachal Pradesh	7520	1984
Assam	68,913	84,992
Manipur	6765	1334
Meghalaya	7832	21,055
Mizoram	3708	11,012
Nagaland	8805	11,734
Sikkim	1915	8384
Tripura	13,008	5766

Source: Government of India (2002b).

Economic: People are compelled to take up rickshaw pulling mainly as a result of an absence of any alternative means of earning a livelihood. However, the occupation provides only a small income, not sufficient even to maintain a family. As a result, there is no scope for pullers to educate their children, giving rise to low economic mobility.

Medical: Poor economic conditions mean that rickshaw pullers also face problems maintaining a minimum standard of health, as well as encountering tensions owing to separation from family members and an inability to give the necessary attention to their family and to their children's education.

Social: Rickshaw pulling is generally considered a low profession. Because of their poor socioeconomic conditions, rickshaw pullers are looked down on and exploited by the people. At the same time, they cannot raise their voice to those who exploit them.

Legal: While other motorised vehicles are allowed to register without limits, the number of rickshaws in Imphal is restricted to 6,400. Moreover, registration is open for one month only: many pullers are not given the chance to register. There are also no parking spaces allotted to rickshaws, so pullers are frequently fined and even booked.

Box 2: Urban transport policy and exclusion of rickshaws

The Government of Manipur is constructing ten flyovers in the small city of Imphal. The foundation for the first (Bir Tikendrajit) was laid on 14 February 2004, with the aim of easing traffic congestion in the area. Another nine will be constructed in the next few years.

The flyovers mean the spending of nearly one-fifth of the annual total road budget. This generates an important question regarding planning in transport policies. It is estimated that around 300 plus villages are still not connected by motorised roads. Existing roads, even in Imphal (where the flyovers will be built), are in a terrible state. The new policy for the construction of flyovers will serve only a very small section of the population, those who depend on cars and other polluting vehicles.

There are around 15,000 rickshaws in Imphal. Rickshaws have proved to be one of the most convenient and cheapest means of transportation, and one of the most environmentally friendly. However, they are currently being replaced by two-wheelers and cars. This boom has been most visible within the past two decades and has been assisted by automobile-friendly policies at national and state level and easy access to cheap used cars and two-wheelers from cities like Delhi. On the other hand, cycles and rickshaws experience unfriendly policies: no lanes are provided, they are treated like untouchables and there is an almost non-functioning public transport system in the city.

Building flyovers in Imphal is another policy to exclude cycles and rickshaws permanently from the city. Instead of making it difficult for bulky polluting vehicles to come into the city, current efforts indicate an automobile-friendly Government policy which will only multiply the traffic problem.

In addition, many people have been displaced by developmental projects in the past (such as dams and hydroelectric projects), as well as the various violent conflicts. Those who survive by pulling rickshaws will be displaced again by such policies.

Cycle rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles have a positive role in modern transport systems, when poverty eradication, cheaper and more easily available means of transport and non-polluted environment are the concern of the authorities. Reduction of pollution in cities requires an integrated policy which can provide a space for non-polluting vehicles like bicycles and cycle rickshaws.

Source: Singh (2004).

Box 3: Licensing without parking: An instrument for the exploitation of rickshaw pullers

To maintain smooth traffic flows, a proper parking system must be administered for all vehicles in a town or city. Authorities should provide proper parking spaces for every vehicle. So far, there is no authorised parking in Imphal for rickshaws, although there is parking for all other motorised vehicles. This also clearly shows that the city traffic policy does not include rickshaws in the category of public transport. Therefore, a rickshaw cannot stop anywhere in the city and must always be on the move.

For the traffic police, rickshaw pullers are the biggest nuisance on the road. Motor vehicle policies are not applicable for rickshaws, since they come under the category of slow-moving vehicles. The roads are also designed in such a way that there is no space left for them.

Consequently, rickshaw pullers have neither right of way nor parking spaces. Rickshaw pullers also experience continuous corruption, insecurity and exploitation. Traffic police and municipal authorities take money from them for parking; if they refuse, the police will puncture their tyres or beat them up. As such, wherever the rickshaw goes, there is trouble with the authorities and traffic police.

Thus, rickshaws on the road are not protected at all by the given system. Licensing without parking is meaningless and in fact restricts rickshaw numbers and movement. The current licensing system also provides an opportunity for exploitation of rickshaw pullers by the authorities, which also leads to prejudice by many people in the city.

Source: Singh (2004).

6 Militarization and internal displacement of the people

A discussion of poverty in Manipur will be incomplete if it does not consider the issue of internal displacement as a result of militarised violence and ethnic clashes. The existence of over 20 militant groups in Manipur and the deployment of armed forces to counter movement and curb the growth of insurgency organisations have led to frequent clashes between the armed forces and militant groups. Over the 20 years from 1951 to 1970, armed forces were summoned as many as 476 times to suppress insurgencies. The frequency of interventions by the armed forces in Manipur increased significantly when it was declared a 'disturbed area' in 1980 and came directly under the purview

of the AFSPA. For instance, the number of interventions in 1980 to 1984 was 369, at an average of once every four days (Haokip, 2003).

Although matters related to human rights violations have been discussed time and again, internal displacement and impoverishment as a result of violent conflict are not highlighted at all. In analysing the causal relation between militarization and socioeconomic conditions in Manipur, we find three distinct processes. First, there is growing militarization in the state; second, there is emergence of ethnic clashes and violence; and third, as a consequence of such violent conflicts, there is internal displacement, which is a root cause of increasing poverty. Table 14 shows figures on internal displacement in Manipur from 1992 to 2001.

Table 14: Internal displacement in Manipur, 1992 to 2001

Year	Cause	No. of persons displaced
1992	Kuki–Naga ethnic conflict	11,000
1993-1997	Kuki–Zomi conflict	15,000
	Thadou–Paite conflict	7500
	Meitei–Pangal Muslims	1000
2001	Naga ceasefire extension	7000

Source: Hussain (2000) and Thomas (2002).

Today, there is high presence of the Indian armed forces in the northeast. This requires a great deal of land for cantonments, barracks and training grounds. As Manipur is a predominantly hilly region, arable land is limited; this small area of land is shared between many army battalions and the inhabitants. Often, this results in economic exploitation of the locals in the form of encroachment on land, forests and other resources, leading to over-consumption of local food grains and cattle and destruction of forest resources. Local grazing grounds, fertile lands, football grounds, etc., have been converted into military cantonments (Indigene, 1996). It is well known that increased militarization means increased land alienation and transformation of the land from productive to non-productive purposes. Ultimately, this leads to the alienation of the people from their own land.

Another important consequence of militarization is in the domestic sphere. The violent conflicts between armed forces and insurgent groups have violated the domestic space, not only resulting in the

death of many civilians but also affecting livelihoods. The active presence of both armed forces and insurgent groups in residential areas has severely affected day-to-day life. The people are afraid to carry out their normal work. A classic example is the incident of the Shajik-Tampak Operation in Chandel district, when an encounter took place between security forces and underground outfits in the latter part of April 2004. As many as 738 villagers of nine villages fled in fear and many more were internally displaced.¹⁵ Table 16 show the number of casualties from 1992 to 2001.

Other consequences are encroachment by the armed forces on school buildings, religious places and offices. This was seen in Chandel district in the early part of 2004 during military operations against insurgent groups.

When there is an increase in civilian casualties, there is also a change in the sex ratio. This implies that ethnic clashes and violence are contributing factors to changes in the sex ratio in Manipur. For instance, in the past decade, there has been a gradual increase in the sex ratio, from 958 to 978. In some districts, the female population is larger than the male. Bishnupur district shows an increase from 984 in 1991 to 1004 in 2001 and Imphal from 973 in 1991 to approximately 1000 in 2001 (see Table 15). As victims of the ethnic clashes and violence are mostly men, who generally are the breadwinners of the family, women are compelled to take up dual responsibilities – looking after the family and earning a living.

In violent conflict situations, the male population is used by both the armed forces and the insurgency organisations, thereby increasing the insecurity of women in all spheres of socioeconomic life. This is particularly the case in Manipur, where women have a greater role in traditional socioeconomic spheres. This vulnerability is also responsible for the emergence of a new people's movement led by women.

¹⁵ Displacement of villagers is a common phenomenon in Manipur. Such incidents have happened in Thanga, Keirak, Kakching and, recently, Kwatha villages. Several such incidents have been reported from various districts of Manipur. In the remote hill areas, when a new army camp is set up inside the village or nearby, villagers leave out of fear of torture whenever there are encounters with insurgents.

Table 15: Sex ratio in Manipur by district, 1991 to 2001

S. No.	District	1991			2001		
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1	Senapati	942	-	942	928	-	928
2	Tamenglong	935	-	935	922	-	922
3	Churachandpur	920	983	931	993	-	993
4	Chandel	920	870	913	990	964	986
5	Thoubal	973	993	980	995	1004	998
6	Bishnupur	979	993	984	1015	984	1004
7	Imphal East	976*	968*	973*	982	1018	992
8	Imphal West	-	-	-	994	1018	1007
9	Ukhrul	884	-	884	920	-	920
10	Manipur	951	975	958	969	1009	978

Note: * This figure indicates the total figure of Imphal East and Imphal West before the division of Imphal district into two.

Source: DCO (1991; 2001).

6.1 General implications of conflict in Manipur

First and foremost, the casualties in any kind of conflict are human. In general, we can identify five types of capital that are affected by conflict: political, social, economic, natural and physical (Goodhand, 2001).

During conflict, political capital is affected, for example decline of democratic processes, increase of military influence, expanded role of the anti-state and inefficient rule of law. The impact on human capital includes deaths, disablement, displacement and inability of the state to provide basic services, such as health, education, food supply and so on. Violence against women, increased poverty, declining literacy and life expectancy and increased infant mortality rates are associated consequences.

Financial capital is affected in terms of destruction of financial institutions, reduced investment and disruption of markets. This, in turn, affects growth rates and investment levels, leading to a lack of credit and outflow of capital. Similarly, disruption in social relations, social dislocation and decline in trust and reciprocity are some of the impacts on social capital. Social capital is deliberately targeted or used to generate adverse outcomes (Goodhand, 2001).

Impacts on natural capital can be seen in terms of breakdown of customary rights and rules of usage, predatory behaviour leading to resource depletion and environmental degradation and lack of management of natural resources. Increased use of marginal lands for military and strategic purposes is associated with conflict. Destruction and lack of investment in infrastructure and services are some of the impacts on physical capital (Goodhand, 2001). The cumulative consequence is threat to lives and livelihoods.

Between 1992 and 2001, the total number of individuals killed in counterinsurgencies was 3006 (Table 16). From 2002 to 2005, the number of casualties recorded was 729.

Table 16: Insurgency-related killings in Manipur, 1992-2001

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
Civilians	84	266	189	183	117	233	87	89	93	70	1411
Security personnel	30	91	98	64	65	111	62	64	51	25	661
Insurgent group activists	51	66	63	74	93	151	95	78	102	161	934
Total	165	423	350	321	275	495	244	231	246	256	3006

Source: See www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/index.html.

Surprisingly, a scheme of reimbursement for counterinsurgency-related expenditure has been formulated for the northeast states. During the periods of 1997 to 1998, 1998 to 1999 and 1999 to 2000, a total of Rs. 377 crore was sanctioned.¹⁶ In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs has introduced a 100 percent centrally funded scheme for the modernisation of police forces in the northeast, with special emphasis on supply of arms and ammunition, vehicles, communication equipment, etc. Under this scheme, the Chief Minister of Manipur asked the centre to release Rs. 1,040 million as a reimbursement for counterinsurgency operations (RPF, 1998). The amount spent by the Government in counterinsurgency operations in the past two decades has been roughly equal to the Annual Plan allocation of 1998 to 1999, which was Rs. 4,250 million (ibid). At the same time, Manipur's annual expenditure on social sector programmes declined by 21.1 percent, at about Rs. 398 crore in the year 2000 to 2001 (Bharat, 2002).

¹⁶ See <http://mha.nic.in/ch1.html#North-East>.

In the Tenth Finance Commission, the total earmarked grant for the northeast states is Rs. 144.30 crore.¹⁷ However, the grant is mainly meant for Police Housing, Police Training, Police Telecommunications, construction of Police Stations/Outposts, repair and renovation of Jails. The list also includes the up-gradation of arms and ammunition, vehicles, and other equipments in the Northeastern states. Out of this, for the state of Manipur, the total amount of grants for security items recommended by the Tenth Finance Commission for Manipur stands at Rs. 1436.96 lakhs (For details see Table 17). The same amount (under the item heads of Police Housing, Police Training and Police Telecommunication) was approved by the Inter Ministerial Empowered Committee, out of which, a total amount of Rs. 766.65 lakhs was released as initial instalment of the total allocated amount of grants. It is needless to mention that this amount does not include the allocation meant for Defence Forces (army and paramilitary forces) deployed in Manipur. The total outlay for the same plan in other sectors is given in Table 18.

Table 17: Grants for security items recommended by the Tenth Finance Commission for Manipur

	Police housing (in Rs. Lakh)	Police training (in Rs. Lakh)	Police tele-communications* (in Rs. Lakh)	Total
Allocation	28	1382.5	26.46	1436.96
Inter-ministerial Empowered Committee	28	1382.5	26.46	1436.96
Release	21	725.81	19.84	766.65

*Note: * This is implemented as a central scheme.*

Source: See www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/index.html.

Conflict is embedded in society and cannot be separated from ongoing socio-political processes. Groups involved have varied rationales for the conflict, and there are various socio-political and economic implications. Although the present crisis in Manipur is not treated as a conventional war, it is not so different from war with regard to the nature and degree of its impacts on socioeconomic life.

¹⁷ See www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/index.html

Table 18: Tenth Plan outlay for Manipur, 2002 to 2007

	Projected outlay (Rs. lakh)
I. Agriculture & Allied Activities	11,386
II. Rural Development	12,091
III. Special Area Programmes	2288
IV. Irrigation & Flood Control	36,854
V. Energy	23,051
VI. Industry & Minerals	33,294
VII. Transport	22,348
VIII. Communications	0
IX. Science, Technology & Environment	1722
X. General Economic Services	24,521
XI. Social Services	
Education	
General Education	19,716
Technical Education	1776
Sports & Youth Services	1463
Art & Culture	3911
Sub-total (Education)	26,866
Medical & Public Health	8173
Water Supply & Sanitation	32,187
Housing (including police housing)	8232
Urban Development (including state capital projects)	13,361
Information & Publicity	259
Welfare of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes	2315
Labour & Employment	5703
Social Welfare	616
Nutrition	4488
Other Social Services*	1000
Total (XI)	103,200
XII. General Services#	9645
Grand Total	280,400

Notes: * For Manipur Development Society (MDS). # Includes Rs. 1100 lakh for General Administration (GAD); Rs. 1425 lakh for Police Upgrading; Rs. 209 lakh for State Academy of Training (SAT); Rs. 49 lakh for Legal Aid; Rs. 1650 lakh for Revenue; Rs. 275 lakh for Judicial Administration; Rs. 275 lakh for Fiscal Administration; Rs. 110 lakh for Fire Service; and Rs. 550 lakh for National Highway Patrolling Scheme.

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

The Central Government's use of the AFSPA to curb insurgency is a kind of declaration of 'internal war', assuming that the area or territory is a 'disturbed area' occupied by the enemy from within (Government of India, 1958: Section 3). AFSPA not only declares areas or states where there is any tribal and ethnic minority movement 'disturbed' but also empowers the army, supposed to be used in external aggression, to use maximum force to suppress so-called enemy insurgent groups. This has brought about more civilian casualties than army personnel and militant casualties. For instance, during 1992 to 2001, out of 3,006 casualties, civilians constituted 1,411, insurgent groups 934 and security personnel 661.¹⁸ The nature of violence and conflict between the insurgent groups and armed forces personnel is not different from any other 'conventional war'. The deployment of huge military forces in a space occupied by civilians and the empowerment of military forces through AFSPA allow for violation of space, as by insurgent groups, which is not less than the consequences of any other war.

Besides, the suspension of 'fundamental rights' under AFSPA restricts all activities.¹⁹ Such conditions lead to the development of illegal trade in drugs, arms, etc. It is not surprising that today Manipur is a transit point for drug trafficking. The state also has one of the largest numbers of HIV/AIDS patients in India. Moreover, small armed groups that need resources are likely to participate in such activities. Such involvement creates conflict and competition among such small groups. In the absence of responsible and stable Government, the power vacuum can be filled by such armed groups. Gradually, emerging groups have developed their own means of obtaining economic resources to service their military organisation. They have started controlling the market, highways, industries and Government

¹⁸ See www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/manipur/data_sheets/index.html.

¹⁹ AFSPA is completely against the fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution as well as several articles in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Section 4(a) enables even a non-commissioned officer of the armed forces to search places, arrest persons, interrogate them and even shoot them to death on 'suspicion' of disturbing the public order. Section 6 protects the armed forces from any legal action for acts committed under AFSPA. See Chenoy (2005) and Loitongbam (2005).

offices, with the main motive of gaining economic power, also extorting money at highways, in markets and in Government departments. In turn, such places become contested space. Once conflict is manifested, armed forces operate, resulting in a complex situation of violence in market areas, resulting in various forms of disturbance, like *bandhs*, strikes, curfews, shooting, kidnapping, extortion, etc, with great impacts on the socioeconomic life of civilians.

6.2 From *Khutlang* to *Khutnek*: Emergence of bondage labour

Village life in Manipur is based mostly on the principle of reciprocity and cooperation. Building houses, organising ceremonies and festivals and agricultural and other allied activities are achieved through mutual help. Agricultural labour is carried out through reciprocal help, called *khutlang*. This system is not only economical but also meets the common needs of the farmers.

Now, there is a new system of operation in the agriculture sector. Cultivators have become more individualistic and *khutlang* is being eroded. The system of hired labour in agriculture, locally known as *khutnek*, is becoming more prominent, although in some exceptional cases, farmers with an equal proportion of land have continued to practise the earlier system of cooperation. From the above, it is clear that there has been a shift in agricultural practice from *khutlang* to *khutnek*. This has led to the emergence of a new working class in Manipur, made up of people who are already internally displaced. As agriculture is seasonal and displaced persons require more money (for the family), they start taking money in advance for the following year, also because they fear they may lose their job in the following year. In the event of crop failure owing to drought, flooding and other unforeseen circumstances, agricultural labourers cannot repay the money. This is one of the factors contributing to the emergence of bonded labour in Manipur.

6.3 Conflict, livelihoods and sustenance

Conflict affects livelihoods and sustenance both directly and indirectly. In the past, the hill tribes and the valley people had a cordial relationship in the market economy. Generally, the hill people would bring forest products and exchange them for essential items such as

salt, kerosene, cooking oil, simple tools and implements for cultivation. However, suspicion has led to the relationship deteriorating. Although the market economy is still there, another major outcome is its gradual localisation. Soon after the ceasefire extension (without territorial limits) in 2001, the operation of the market became more or less confined within the community. People stop buying essential commodities from shops belonging to other communities. Meanwhile, internally displaced persons are forced to exchange all their belongings for food grains and clothes.

In trying to assert their grievances, communities/groups or organisations often use economic blockades. Generally, these are imposed on National Highways 39 and 53, regarded as the lifelines of the state. The flow of the essential commodities is badly affected, which is responsible for sudden increases in prices. Frequent *bandhs* (see Table 19), curfews, operations and shootouts (symptoms of conflict) lead to material deprivation. Individuals and households choose their levels of consumption by maximising utility subject to their expected lifetime resources (Romer, 2001).

Bandhs and strikes have become a normal feature. It is believed that a 24-hour *bandh* costs lakhs of rupees and forces thousands of daily wage earners to survive on minimum sustenance.²⁰ The state witnessed over 100 *bandhs* in 2000, costing state domestic product about Rs. 4,479 lakh daily. According to the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), which once banned *bandhs* and strikes in Manipur in 2003, a single day's *bandh* in the state leads to a loss of over Rs. 9 crore and 72 *bandhs* in 2001 to 2002 cost the state exchequer Rs. 676.48 crore.²¹

²⁰ See www.kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=bandh_counter&Idoc_Session=28fa17709ef8239f83a499224daf12de.

²¹ Sandham (2005)

Table 19: Number of *bandhs* and strikes in Manipur, 2002

Date	Month	Hours	Imposed by
14	January	24	Drivers day observed across state
26	-	24	Boycott call and general strike by 14 underground outfits of northeast region
11	February	-	Public rally against 'Senapati conclave' staged in Imphal
16	April	12	All India Trade Union Congress calls general strike in state
22	May	-	United National Liberal Front (UNLF) imposes ban on two local dailies
1	June	-	Rickshaw pullers stage <i>dharna</i> in protest against harassment by traffic police
16	July	24	Biramangol college students impose <i>bandh</i> in Imphal EastChurachandpur district students union imposes <i>bandh</i> in districtState-wide <i>bandh</i> against shifting of Secret Service for Brotherhood (SSB) from Manipur
18		24	
22		8	
15	August	24	General strike by eight outfitsZeliangrong United Clubs Association Manipur imposes <i>bandh</i> on National Highway 39
25		85	
7	September	-	National Highway 39 <i>bandh</i> called in protest against Piphema incident, protest rally staged at Manipur University campus, all Manipur Students Union organises sit-in protest in Imphal
13		24	Kuki Students Organisation (Sadar Hills) calls Sadar Hills <i>bandh</i> from midnight
25		--	Transport services on National Highway 53 suspended indefinitely following assault on drivers and passengersUnited
28		24	Clubs of Manipur (UCM) calls general strike in state to protest centre's inaction on highway security
4	October	30	UCM launches a month-long National Highway 39 boycott, General strike by Manipur People's Liberation Front Imphal East general strike by Biramangol College students
5		12	
20		60	
8	November	96	Four-day economic blockade on National Highway 39 by Mao Students Union

Source: Sandham (2005)

Kangla Online Bandh Counter recorded 16 bandhs between September 2002 and March 2004 in Manipur. Table 20 shows the number of bandhs/strikes in 2004.

Table 20: *Bandhs* in Manipur, 2004

	Hours	Called by	Reason
13.7.2004	48	Jointly called by 32 organisations	State-level <i>bandh</i> protesting against the killing of Th. Manorama Devi by Assam Rifles
21.6.2004	24	Meeyangri Apunba Khongjang Thoupanglup	Against the prolonged occupation of the Kangla by the security forces
12.6.2004	18	Manipur Forward Youth Front (MAFYF)	Protest against the killing of Thokchom Doren (27) alias Naba from Lamjao in an alleged fake encounter
11.6.2004	240	All Tribal Students Union of Manipur	Economic blockade on both national highways from midnight 2 June to midnight 11 June, demanding assurance from Government in writing to safeguard students selected under subsidiary list last year to undergo Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery/Bachelor of Dental Surgeons course
31.5.2004	18	MAFYF	Against extension of disturbed area status for another year in Manipur
17.5.2004	48	Kuki National Front (KNF)	KNF's founding day
13.5.2004	96	Kha Nongpok Nupi Lup, Moreh	Demanding repairing of roads at Moreh town
26.4.2004	17	United National Liberal Front (UNLF)	<i>Bandh</i> called as a part of boycott on Indian parliamentary elections
20.4.2004	17	UNLF	Boycott of parliamentary elections in Manipur
13.3.2004	4	Meitei Council, Moreh	Protest against atrocities meted out to local resident and family members in Moreh Ward 4 (Prem Nagar) by a team of the 37th Assam Rifles

Source: Samom (2002).

7 Conflict and women in Manipur

7.1 Traditional roles of women in Manipur

In traditional Manipuri society, women had a relatively high status. They constituted a big chunk of the workforce in the state and gender sensitivity was a hallmark of the Manipuri civilisation. One characteristic was the collective endeavours of women, either in work or in response to a crisis. This is evident from the *pacha/paja loishang* and women's right to appeal. *Pacha/paja*, a women-only court, was a prototype of modern women's bodies, such as commissions for women, etc. It can also be regarded as one of the highest forms of rights endowed to women by a traditional society. The institution first sorted out disputes in the royal family, and was formalised as a state institution during the reign of Medingu Paikhomba (1666 to 1697) (K.B. Singh, 2001). With subsequent kings, *pacha loishang* underwent structural changes. When British colonialism arrived in 1891, this novel institution was abolished in the attempt to create a uniform administrative and legal system. The modern Manipur state has not reinvented the indigenous institution. Moreover, the absence of a state women's commission or a women's cell at the Police Station are matters of concern in the strife-torn state.

Another aspect in traditional time was the power of appeal of women, especially in the realm of capital punishment. When the king has declared such a punishment, only the women could intervene to annul the decision. Usually, if a group of not less than 100 women (dressed in white) gathered at the site of the punishment at the time of execution in favour of the accused, 'speaking or without speaking', then the accused was released (K.B. Singh, 2001: 6). After this, all the rights, freedom and privileges of the accused citizen were restored. The Naga women performed a similar role during head hunting. Even in a pitched battle between two warring parties, if women came between waving leaves or clothes, the war had to stop immediately. The same applied even in ordinary fighting between two men (Zehol, 1998).

The power of appeal was ignored on two occasions in the history of Manipur. One was on 13 August 1947, when the British hanged three persons on account of a palace revolt. Thousands of women silently thronged the Polo Ground dressed in white mourning clothes, hoping to secure the lives of the accused (K.B. Singh, 2001). The

second was on 16 May 1980, when the Chief Minister turned down the appeal of thousands of women against the imposition of AFSPA in Manipur (National Research Centre, 1999). Another appeal (albeit in a different form) against AFSPA was heard when six women stripped nude in front of the Assam Rifles, following the rape and murder of a woman on 18 July 2004. A review committee is now working to bring about changes in the Act.

More evidence of the significant role of women in Manipur lies in the *keithel* (bazaar or marketplace), an institution belonging solely to women. Compulsory labour or military service rendered by the men to the state, *lallup*, has provided the space for women to pursue economic activities. The existence of the *lallup* system was also responsible for women taking up agricultural and cultivation work. They also took up weaving and other household work to supplement the family economy. What this suggests is that the Manipuri women played an important role not only in the subsistence economy but also in marketing and trade. Chaki-Sircar (1984) felt that, in both cases, the women belong to a wider extra domestic world, and exerted political power that arose from their socioeconomic role. Even after the abolition of *lallup* by the British in 1892 (replaced by a tax system and economic monetisation), the *keithel* continues to survive and women's economic role is still intact.

Referring to the economic role of women, Chaki-Sircar (1984) states that, in addition to the *lallup* system, absence of males during the 'seven-year desertion' (1826 to 1832), when Manipur was at war with Burma (present-day Myanmar) was responsible for women taking up trade and economic activities. The advent of colonialism in 1891, which integrated Manipur into a wider capitalist system and improved the transportation network, enabled them to extend their trading activities beyond the state.

In spite of reasonable social status and limited property rights,²² there are hints of gender bias in traditional Meitei society, mainly in the private sphere. In this regard, Dun pointed out that women held an inferior position and were considered more as goods and chattels than

²² Women had no right to inherit their husband's or father's property but could inherit their mother's. However, in middle-class or rich families, the family could use its discretion to hand over land to a daughter at the time of marriage. In addition, an amount of land is earmarked for a woman in the maternal family in case of divorce or separation, to which the woman has legitimate claims.

as persons (Dun, 1886). Likewise, McCulloch (1859: 19) noted that ‘though useful and laborious (they) are but indifferently treated. A man can put away his wife without any fault on her part, and if a person of influence does, he may do so without it being noticed. Women are really slaves of their husbands; they are sold in satisfaction of their debts.’ He further mentioned instances where men pawned their wives to purchase ponies. Women were also victims of polygamy²³ and other forms of male oppression. Moreover, acceptance of Hinduism as the state religion in the 18th century brought about various changes in the lives of the people of Manipur. The emerging patriarchal social system and Hindu ideology eroded women’s status in society.

A discussion on the social status of women in Manipur is incomplete without a mention of the two ‘women’s wars’ (or *nupi lan*), in 1904 and 1939, against the injustices of the British. The first was against the imposition of forced labour on the male population. Women took the forefront and the British authorities withdrew the order. This movement was the precursor of the future anti-imperialist movement in the state and of women’s collective action against the repressive measures of the state (Yambem, 1976). The second *nupi lan* was against exploitation, irregularities and malpractice in the administration of the state. In 1939, the state was heading towards a famine as a result of poor harvests. Women spoke against the hoarding of rice by rich Marwari traders and asked to stop the export of rice from the state. Failure to comply with their demands led to the hijacking of bullock carts of paddy heading to Marwari warehouses and clashes between the agitating women and the Assam Rifles.

7.2 *Current-day situation of women in Manipur*

In the post-independence period, women of Manipur participated more in the public arena. The increasing political consciousness led them to participate in the demand for responsible Government in 1954 and 1959. Likewise, in 1960, they formed the Women Assembly Demand Committee to press the Central Government for a responsible stable Government (Bimola Devi, 1988). Women also contributed greatly in the Statehood Demand Movement. In 1973, when the MPP-led Government was toppled, women were the first to raise their voice in favour of an anti-defection law.

²³ Chaki-Sircar (1984) states that the seven-year desertion was responsible for the practice of polygamy in Manipur.

Table 21 shows that women have started participating in the political domain in significant numbers. The number of Meitei women in the *panchayati raj* (decentralised Government) institutions is around 36 percent, more than the allocated quota of 33 percent. There is also increased participation in women's movements against social evils and human rights violations, such as the *nisha bandis* and *meira paibis*.

Shrinking opportunities and unemployment have become a major issue. In 2000, there were 397,152 unemployed youth in the state, of which 106,067 were women (Table 22).

Table 21: Participation of women in state assembly elections, 1948 to 2002

S. No.	Year SC	Contested			Elected			Grand
		ST	General	SC	ST	General	total	
1	1948-1949	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1952-1957	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1957-1962	0	0	0	0	1	1	2*
4	1962-1967	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	1967-1974	0	0	0	2	1	0	3*
6	1974-1979	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
7	1980-1985	0	2	7	0	0	0	0
8	1985-2000	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
9	2000-2002	0	7	7	0	0	1	1#
10	2002-	0	7	5	0	0	1	1#

Notes: ST = scheduled tribe; SC = scheduled caste. * Nominated candidates. # Elected for the second time consecutively.

Source: Compiled from various sources.

The female literacy rate is 60 percent, as compared with that for males at 78 percent. The figure is lower in rural areas, at only 56 percent as compared with 75 percent for males. At the same time, the additional tasks women take up are enormous: the burden of sustaining the family sits on women, as witnessed in the *keithel*.

Besides this, 60 percent of women are in the productive age group (Laishram, 2002) and they also form the largest group of marginal workers. The majority of female workers are engaged in agriculture, as cultivators and labourers. The preponderance of female workers in agriculture is taken as an indication of the subsistence level of

Table 22: Unemployment of women according to education level, 2000

S. No.	Category	Total	% of total	Female	% of total
1	Under-Matric (below Class X)	132,068	33.25	15,869	14.96
2	Matric (Class X)	154,808	38.98	50,199	47.33
3	Undergraduate	60,287	15.18	20,494	19.32
4	Bachelor of Arts	27,550	6.94	12,009	11.32
5	Bachelor of Science	9263	2.33	3014	2.84
6	Bachelor of Commerce	881	0.22	270	0.25
7	Medicine (MBBS)	377	0.10	204	0.20
8	Veterinary (bachelor study)	197	0.05	32	0.03
9	Agriculture (bachelor study)	342	0.08	99	0.09
10	Bachelor of Engineering	1168	0.30	105	0.10
11	Law (LLB)	217	0.05	53	0.04
12	Postgraduate Art	2993	0.75	1273	1.20
13	Postgraduate Science	2132	0.54	782	0.74
14	Diploma in Engineering & Technology	1967	0.50	384	0.36
15	Other	2902	0.73	1286	1.22
	Total	397,152	100.00	106,067	100.00

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

farming in the state (NCAER, 2004). In domestic affairs, they also play a major role.

Although institutions such as *nisha bandis* and *meira paibis* continue, and although women's involvement in economic activities remains significant (see Table 23), the modern educational and political system has degraded their status, as males are given more opportunities. At present, the status of women is unequal compared with that of men. The state needs considerable expansion in health care provision and new technology in agriculture, particularly for women. Globalisation requires the diversified employment of female workers through appropriate education and training (NCAER, 2004).

Women's problems are exacerbated by increases in physical violence against them (see Table 24). In this regard, Susila (2003) states that, from July 1998 to December 2001, there were 737 cases in the Family Counselling Centre.

Table 23: Occupation type (male and female, urban and rural), 2001

	Total workers		Total main workers		Total marginal workers		% of total main workers in:					
							Cultivation		Agricultural labour		Household industry	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Total	38.71	46.72	28.50	32.69	10.22	14.03	17.87	53.39	9.62	11.76	12.90	8.17
Male	45.17	50.07	38.45	40.26	6.72	9.81	20.92	53.88	7.37	9.39	4.85	2.86
Female	32.28	43.20	18.58	24.74	13.70	18.46	13.62	53.02	12.74	14.64	24.13	14.64

Source: DCO (2001).

Table 24: Pattern of violence against women

S. no.	Nature of violence	1999	2000	2001	2002 (Jan to Aug)	2003 (Jan to July)
1	Murder	11	11	2	2	-
2	Rape	10	12	16	7	5
3	Molest	14	29	36	24	29
4	Kidnap	42	40	69	56	38
5	Beating and torture	12	9	12	29	-
6	Suicide	8	11	8	-	-
7	Burning	-	-	-	1	-
8	Other	8	7	8	15	-

Source: Susila (2003).

7.3 *Implications of conflict for women*

In the prevailing conflict situation, there are continuous threats to all people. Among them, women are the most affected in terms of threats to life, sexual harassment, rape and restriction on daily activities. They undergo trauma when near and dear ones are arrested arbitrarily, tortured, detained or killed during conflict.

Living in a region of low-intensity conflict, women find themselves weighed down by a variety of difficulties, both directly and indirectly. Besides social and economic hardship, they also face psychological trauma, more so than their male counterparts. The most worrying aspect is the fear of the unknown. As one person put it, ‘any time, any one of your relatives or even yourself, or your own house or locality, can be a target. And you cannot sleep until all your family members return safely to the house’ (ADAR, 2002: 2).

Understanding the impact of the conflict on women can be helpful in the search for a perspective on poverty. In Manipur, women have participated in almost every social movement, starting from the *nupilans* to the anti-AFSPA protest. Movements usually gather at a *keithel*, which are provide a livelihood and also a refuge for the poor. The *ima keithel* (mothers’ market) hosts more than 7000 *keithel phambis* (women folk) on any working day.

Box 4: The *keithel* as a contested space

Although the *keithel* holds regular license holders who are engaged in regular business, more than 60 percent are not license holders. Most of these are victims of displacement, who have lost their cultivable land to projects of development, or ethnic conflict. A majority are ordinary women who come to try their luck, bringing anything from the kitchen garden, forest, rivers, ponds or lakes. Shrinking opportunities to earn an alternative livelihood in the age of structural reforms and globalisation have directed many women to this urban centre of economic activity. In this way, *keithels* have also become a contested space between regular stall/license holders and non-license holders.

Source: Thangjam, Homen, “Armed Conflict and Women’s Well Being in Manipur”, *Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2, July – September 2005, pp. 117 – 27.

A related concern is the multiple roles that women take on in a

situation of conflict. Taking on so many roles has the potential of affecting one's earning capacity, health, family, etc., especially given that women continue to form a large proportion of the workforce. Institutions have also been badly affected owing to prolonged conflicts and violence. As *keithels* also serve as a platform to launch any form of protest, agitation or movement,²⁴ their normal operation is severely affected. In response to agitation, the Government usually imposes *keithel bandhs*.²⁵ Curfews, general strikes and shootouts, carried out by various groups, have also affected the *keithels*.

Box 5: Multiple demands on women in times of conflict

It has become mandatory for women to participate in night vigils as *meira paibis* (torch bearers). As the situation demands, during the daytime they are engaged in economic activities and in the night they spend hours guarding their *leikai* (locality). On average, a *meira paibi* spends three to four hours with her sisters keeping watch. Many of the sheds where they spend their time are poorly built, in most cases without walls. All the while they are exposed to dangers – the bullets of the conflicting parties and sexual and physical harassment – and are at the mercy of the elements. Once they return home, they have to stay alert for the sound of clanging of 'poles' that signal an emergency situation and rush out to face the unknown. In between these two sojourns, they have to perform domestic chores. This has inevitably affected health, nutrition, rest and child care.

Source: Thangjam, Homen, "Armed Conflict and Women's Well Being in Manipur", *Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2, July – September 2005, pp. 117 – 27.

Most women grow vegetables themselves and then carry them on their heads to the nearest market or peddle from door to door. 'In this society, women are more resilient, hardworking and much more

²⁴ In the first *nupi lan*, the *keithel* and 28 sheds that housed about 300 market women were razed to the ground. The second began with the gathering of women at the *keithel*.

²⁵ For example, in May 1980, the government imposed a *bandh* over Sana *keithel* for 11 days, to ward off agitation by women against the imposition of AFSPA. For details, see National Research Centre (1999). These tactics have been followed in other instances too, such as the agitation against the rape of Manorama in 2004.

realistic than men in coming to terms with their lives. You'll find most women willing to work for long hours just to earn Rs. 5. They would not mind working for eight hours, or walking 3 km carrying the vegetables on their heads, rather than sell themselves in the flesh trade' (Thangjam 2005).

Then, there are times when they have to participate in processions, stretching on for days, weeks and months. For example, the protest against the imposition of AFSPA in 1980 lasted from 17 April to 28 May. One of the latest agitations was against of AFSPA following the alleged rape and murder of a woman in July 2004. This led to increasing numbers of school/college dropouts and a tendency to join armed opposition groups, even among women. This also took more time away from women.

The impact of conflict on women is equally severe if not more so in the hills. As the region is less developed in terms of infrastructure, the people remain more backward and poor. Less has been done so far by the Government to develop the region. The hill people, by and large, continue to engage in traditional occupations, such as collection and gathering of firewood, fruit and roots, and they have to fetch water from afar. The ethnic conflicts and violence have restricted normal economic activities. Constant checks by the security forces lead to a loss of precious time. The atmosphere of uncertainty means that the struggle to eke out a livelihood is carried out at people's own risk (ADAR, 2002). The consequences are even worse for women, as they often become victims of rape, molestation and torture.

8 Changing profile of development and patterns of conflict and poverty

With the launching of the first five-year plan in 1951 for the whole country, the process of planned economic development for Manipur began. The investment/outlay for the first three five-year plans was small, only Rs. 20.68 crore. It was only in the Fourth Plan, with an investment of Rs. 30.25 crore that the process of economic development in Manipur can be said to have actually started. Even then, the total allocation, beginning from 1951 to 1952 until the end of Fifth Plan (29 years), was only Rs. 153.93 crore. The plan received a boost only in the Sixth Plan, with an allocation of Rs. 240 crore (Table 25).

Table 25: Plan allocations for Manipur state, 1951-2007, in Rs. crore

Plan	Approved outlay	Central assistance	Expenditure
First Plan (1951-1956)	1.55	-	1.08
Second Plan (1956-1961)	6.25	-	6.22
Third Plan (1961-1966)	12.88	-	12.82
Three Annual Plan (1966-1969)	10.14	-	7.20
Fourth Plan (1969-1974)	30.25	26.13	31.25
Fifth Pan (1974-1979)	92.86	55.97	98.90
Annual Plan (1979-1980)	31.00	27.60	32.53
Sixth Plan (1980-1985)	240.00	24.00	243.32
Seventh Plan (1985-1990)	430.00	545.00	501.22
Annual Plan (1990-1992)	365.00	345.88	863.42
Eight Plan (1992-1997)	979.00	NA	1219.78
Annual Plan (1992-1993)	210.00	193.54	170.55
Annual Plan (1993-1994)	230.00	212.70	174.39
Annual Plan (1994-1995)	240.00	217.94	220.85
Annual Plan (1995-1996)	300.00	272.00	286.82
Annual Plan (1996-1997)	350.00	316.30	367.17
Ninth Plan (1997-2002)	2426.69	2215.60	NA
Annual Plan (1997-1998)	410.00	386.81	367.34
Annual Plan (1998-1999) (anticipated)	425.00	456.27	388.55
Annual Plan (1999-2000) (anticipated)	475.00	506.08	452.61
Annual Plan (2000-2001) (anticipated)	451.00	565.86	451.00
Annual Plan (2001-2002)	520.00	585.89	NA
Tenth Plan (2002-2007) (proposed)	3838.36	-	-

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

Analysis of past five-year plans shows that the social services sector has been accorded highest priority. Allocations to the energy sector, supposed to be vital to the development of other sectors, have been low. Allocations to industry are also very low. Otherwise, the state's performance in sectors like education and medical coverage is better than the all-India average. However, the state's economy remains almost stagnant (Table 26).

Table 26: Allocation of funds to various sectors, Seventh Plan to Ninth Plan (percent)

S. no	Sector	Seventh Plan		Eighth Plan		Ninth Plan	
		All India (total)	Manipur	All India (total)	Manipur	All India (total)	Manipur
1	Agriculture & Allied Activities	5.85	13.16	5.18	9.35	3.00	7.56
2	Rural Development	4.95	3.34	7.93	1.56	8.60	2.52
3	Irrigation	9.43	18.14	7.49	18.08	0.50	13.21
4	Energy	30.63	8.47	26.62	18.07	31.40	13.82
5	Industry	12.28	5.61	10.81	4.07	10.60	5.21
6	Transport	12.58	16.63	12.88	16.40	16.60	16.47
7	Social Services	17.53	29.50	18.20	16.14	14.80	25.53
8	Others	6.75	5.15	10.89	5.33	14.50	15.68
Total		100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

With the aim of containing poverty, the state has adopted a multi-pronged strategy in various sectors in the ongoing Tenth Plan (2002 to 2007). The aims and objectives are highlighted briefly in the following. The main occupation of the people in Manipur is agriculture and about 70 percent of the state's population depends on it. Considering that agriculture and allied activities have contributed a great deal to the state's economy, it is accorded a priority. The main thrust in this sector includes: increasing the area under paddy crop; increasing the area under high-yield varieties; horizontal expansion of area under improved paddy varieties in the foothills; use of cold-tolerant, drought-resistant varieties of paddy in *jhum* fields; intensification of crops and cropping systems; and development of irrigation infrastructure. Important activities include adaptive trials of field crops, with identification, selection and introduction of suitable cropping systems, development and maintenance of main and intermediate drainage systems and modernisation, maintenance and effective operation of irrigation systems.

Equal emphasis is given to horticultural development and its related industries. Efforts are going into producing good quality seeds and planting materials. Another sector closely related to agriculture is forestry. The main targets in this sector are economic plantation; enhanced social forestry; preserving and augmenting the production of indigenous minor forest products like orchids, agar, cane, etc., by growing them in suitable areas; and promoting rubber plantation. The sector also aims to control soil erosion through afforestation, fuel wood and fodder plantation, regeneration of degraded forest and control/improvement of shifting cultivation.

The plan highlights breeding and production of livestock and poultry by adopting and applying appropriate breeding methods, imparting basic training in scientific livestock and poultry rearing and schemes to increase production of all major livestock.

Cooperative societies are one of the major players in the state economy. There are about 5,029 registered cooperative societies in the state. To improve the functioning and implementation of various programmes/schemes undertaken by these societies, the plan has the following objectives: to bring about improvements in the working and management of cooperative societies through motivation of the membership and leadership at grassroots level; to introduce new societies

where necessary; to channel continuous agricultural credit to farmers; to strengthen the working conditions of good societies; to implement feasible schemes; and to strengthen the requisite infrastructure.

Further, the plan aims to give schemes to those who are living below the poverty line in the hills and rural areas, for the creation of durable assets under the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), which is part of the JGSY (Jawahar Gram Samrdhi Yojana). In the same way, under the PMGY (Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana), the plan has an outlay for primary education – Rs. 8267 lakh; rural electrification – Rs. 4120 lakh; primary health services – Rs. 5800 lakh; nutrition – 4079.25 lakh; rural drinking water supply – Rs. 10,876 lakh; and rural shelter – Rs 2343.40 lakh.

The plan details the scientific management of land with a view to deriving maximum benefit from land users, based on an accurate and modern information system.

The plan also aims to achieve improvements in education through rapid qualitative improvements; promotion of girls' education; drinking water facilities for primary and upper primary schools; strengthening of academic staff; strengthening of science, arts, commerce and law faculties; and strengthening of existing libraries with adequate texts, references and internet facilities, etc.

During the Tenth Plan, priority attention will go to providing for the health needs of the people, particularly those living in rural and tribal areas, with the objective of attaining 'health for all' and 'all for health'. The outlay for the Ninth Plan (1997 to 2002) and proposed outlay for the Tenth Plan (2002 to 2007) and Annual Plan (2002 to 2003) is given in Table 27.

We must also bring out the vastly unequal development and economic disparity between the hills and the valley of Manipur. The hill economy is essentially one of subsistence, agrarian in nature. In essence, the economic backwardness of the hill people is a case of poverty within poverty (Kamkhenthang, 2000). The poverty of the hill people is reflected in several forms – high levels of illiteracy, ill health, unemployment and failure of commerce and overall development (Kamei, 2000).

The region is a classic case of negligence: since the attainment of statehood, the Government has doled out a few sops in the hope of

Table 27: Health outlay in Ninth and Tenth Plans and Annual Plan (2002 to 2003)

Scheme	9th Plan agreed outlay (in Rs. Crores)	Anticipated expenditure (in Rs. Crores)	10th Plan proposed outlay (in Rs. Crores)	AP proposed outlay (in Rs. Crores)
Primary Health Care	1786.06	3086.20	5800.00	1200.00
Secondary Health Care	640.92	733.20	1059.00	154.00
Tertiary Health Care	495.08	181.49	891.00	120.00
Medical Education	58.55	232.03	100.00	23.00
Disease Control Programme	209.59	140.58	50.00	10.00
Upgrade of Secondary Health Care System (New)	-	5.00	3.00	3.00
Upgrade of Secondary Administration Under Expected Family Contribution (New)	-	220.00	380.00	200.00

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

Table 28: Assistance through Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), 1992 to 1997, Rs. crore

Sector	8 th Plan outlay	1992-1993 actual expenditure	1993-1994 actual expenditure	1994-1995 anticipated expenditure	1995-1996 proposed outlay
1. Agriculture and Allied Services	680.00	78.35	68.20	155.70	159.00
2. Village and Small Industries	145.0	22.60	7.76	16.74	25.90
3. Education (including Ashram School)	495.00	125.63	153.69	76.15	111.00
4. Water Supply	25.00	5.33	2.00	30.24	20.00
5. Medical & Public Health	137.00	36.24	32.08	20.85	21.00
6. Housing	335.00	80.01	75.08	83.74	32.00
7. Communications	205.00	19.37	27.33	63.67	40.21
8. Other	253.00	66.95	45.59	35.72	57.89
Grand total	2275.00	434.48	411.73	432.81	467.00

Source: Horam (2000).

placating the impoverished common people. There has been no serious initiative to improve the living conditions of the people in the hill areas. By any standard, the fact that the tribal people have been kept out of the process of modern development is palpably clear. The tribal people are also subjected to ruthless exploitation at the hands of corrupt officials, contractors and politicians.

Lack of funds cannot be a factor in the socioeconomic backwardness of the tribal people, as the hill region is getting assistance from the Central Government. The following tables confirm this. Table 28 shows approved outlay and expenditure under special central assistance for the Tribal Sub-Plan during the Eighth Plan (1992 to 1997).

Table 29 shows the Ninth Plan approved outlay (1997 to 2002), proposed outlay for the Tenth Plan (2002 to 2007) and proposed outlay for the Annual Plan (2002 to 2003) for the Tribal Sub-Plan.

Table 29: Outlay for Ninth, Tenth and Annual Plan for TSP (Rs. lakh)

S. no.		9th Plan approved outlay	9th Plan anticipated expenditure	10th Plan proposed outlay	Annual proposed outlay
1	Direction & Administration	840.00	311.27	4200.00	275.00
2	Development of Scheduled Tribes	391.00	123.0	1955.00	120.00
4	Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan	2875.00	2875.00	14025.00	124.00
	Grand total	4106.00	3309.27	20180.00	519.00

Source: Planning Commission (2002).

The above figures clearly show the negligence of successive State Governments; this and corruption at various levels of the state machinery account for the poor development of the hill districts. Of late, it has been alleged that underground groups are also interfering in development work (Phanjanbam, 2001). Inter- and intra-tribal conflicts and tensions are also hampering the smooth socioeconomic development of the region. Only a narrow and highly opportunistic section of the population has profited from the central assistance meant for general development.

Box 6: Prime Minister's special packages to northeast India including Manipur

Prime Minister Deve Gowda appeared in 1996 to have been convinced that development efforts and counterinsurgency measures must go hand-in-hand in the region. He seemed to have realised that the Government simply could not wait for an insurgency to end or the situation to improve before launching serious development and economic regeneration drives. He toured the region for six days and in October 1996 came up with a Rs. 6,100 crore exclusive economic package for the region. His successor, I.K. Gujral, increased this amount to more than Rs. 7,000 crore, and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in January 2000 announced a Rs. 10,000 crore special package for the region.

Prime Minister Deve Gowda set up a high-level committee to list the requirements for infrastructure development in the region. The committee went on to recommend earmarking of Rs. 28,000 crore for basic infrastructure for possible industrial investments. The projection on that occasion showed a huge gap, but the fact remains that funds have been flowing in liberally to the region, with money available from the Department of the North Eastern Region (DONER) and the North Eastern Council (NEC). And this is a small part of the enormous amount of funding available to the states through different central schemes, one-time packages announced by successive Prime Ministers, 'peace packages' and grants by international development agencies, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which approved a master project for the Northeast of Rs. 2,000 crore in 2003.

Once again, the familiar problem of packages being left largely unimplemented has come to neutralise its intended impact. This is because of poor monitoring, lack of accountability and non-adherence to the set time frame for project execution. Central Government admits to problems of misappropriation, diversion of development funds and poor monitoring. On 26 October 2004, DONER Minister P.R. Kyndiah announced a 'special economic package' of Rs. 240 crore to the troubled state of Manipur, meant for projects in the fields of education, health, power, transport and communication. Announcing the package – from central resources – Minister Kyndiah said that utilisation of the funds would be 'strictly monitored'. He added that 'we are aware that funds sanctioned earlier for various projects have been siphoned out or diverted. We have reminded the Chief Minister to prevent such anomalies. There could be a significant impact on the State's fortunes if our guidelines are adhered to.' However, the continuity of such efforts is broken up by changes in Central Government and in the state. The tragedy insofar as the region is concerned is that New Delhi changes its policy when the Government changes.

Source: Compiled from various sources, including Hussain (2006) and Ramakrishnan (2004).

9 Conclusion

The types of conflict prevalent in Manipur vary from inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts to insurgency, resulting in a situation of ongoing low-intensity conflict and violence. Each of these conflicts is at the cost of human lives and the economy. An examination of the conflicts and poverty reveals that normal lives are affected, and that there is the potential for another round of conflict if the situation continues unchecked.

It is clear that ethnic conflicts have a negative impact on Manipuri society. Conflict causes can be multiple in nature but the consequences are similar, i.e. increasing poverty. The above analysis shows that several ethnic groups exist, with different ideologies and interests, ranging from secessionist to revivalist movements. In order to achieve their desires, conflict seems to be inevitable.

Now, the question is whether conflict produces poverty or poverty is the cause of conflict. It can be safely argued that ethnic conflicts in Manipur have increased poverty, directly and indirectly. Directly, since conflict is usually associated with massive destruction, loss of property and mass internal displacement. And indirectly, because of fear or paranoia: people prefer not to go back to their original homes. They stay as underprivileged outsiders in other areas rather than risking their lives.

The study has shown the factors responsible for the emergence of a new socioeconomic class of poor in Manipur. This does not mean that there was no poverty in traditional Manipuri society, but the form and condition of poverty then was different to what we see now. Violent conflicts have contributed to increased number of poor people in Manipur.

It is evident that conflict gives rise to increased poverty but it is not a sufficient condition for or prime cause of conflict. Nevertheless, the fight over scarce resources and the attempt to maintain a monopoly has in some ways provided the immediate trigger for conflict.

The ongoing conflict has led to internal displacement and economic deprivation, which has led to the emergence of a new dimension of poverty in the state. If conflict and violence continue unchecked, this may give rise to a situation whereby poverty leads to conflict.

In this regard, military measures are not the only means to tackle conflict in the state. It is imperative that efforts are made to produce a multi-pronged policy and holistic approach to address the problem, at both socioeconomic and political level.

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