

MANIPUR – 2023: NEED TO GO BEYOND THE STEREOTYPICAL ANALYTICAL TOOLS

Dr. Padmashree Pattnaik*

ABSTRACT

The ethnic clash between Meiti people and the Kuki, Naga and others is not a conventional confrontation between the tribal people living in the remote hills and forest and outsiders. The traditional stereotypical analytical tool to study various aspects of tribal population in India is no more adequate in the context of vast structural and cultural changes among the tribals in the last few decades. Owing to demographic changes, the youth play a much more dominant role than the tribal chieftains in the traditional political structures. Physical connectivity, knowledge connectivity, electronic connectivity and unprecedented cultural connectivity between the tribal communities and non-tribals through social media has fundamentally changed the nature of interaction. In Manipur, it is no more a case of conflict between the remotely located tribals and the outsiders intending to interfere in the cultural traditions. On the contrary it appears to be a clash between two groups of people on the issues of secular rights to resources.

Keywords: Manipur, Tribals, Meitis, Kukis, Nagas.

Introduction

The ethnic clash on May 2023 between Meitei people and the Kuki, Zo and other people living in the surrounding hills has many far-reaching implications, not only for the stable co-existence between the tribal and non-tribal people, but also for the tribal politics in the country as a whole. The purpose of this article is to analyze and identify the new perspectives to understand the nature of the conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals, in the context of recent incident and to make an assessment of the relevance of the traditional stereotypical approaches that have hitherto dominated studies and discussions on this subject.

Meitei people constitute the majority of the population of Manipur. Out of the total population of nearly 3.5 million, the Meiteis and the tribal population constitute nearly 53% and 40% respectively. The Meiteis are largely Hindus, they include some Buddhists, Muslims also. They live mostly in the Imphal Valley. The tribal population consists mostly of Christian Kukis and Nagas who constitute about 40% of the population of the State. Traditionally they have been staying in the reserved hill region that is nearly 90% of the area of the State. The Meiteis are not permitted to settle in the hilly regions as per the Land Reform Act of Manipur. Hence, the fundamental contrast is between Meiteis people who constitute roughly 53% of the population, yet reside in the Imphal Valley, that is about 10% of the total area of the State and the Christian Kuki and Naga people who constitute about 40% of the population residing in the rest of the area of the State that is about 90% of the total area of the State. Politically, the Meiteis have a dominant position in the State Legislative Assembly. 19 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes i.e., for the Naga and Kukis whereas 40 seats are unreserved. In the last election, the ruling party won 39 seats and the winning candidates were mostly Meiteis. The Indian National Congress won 20 seats in 2002, 30 in 2007, 42 in 2012, 28 in 2017 and came down to only 05 in 2022 elections. This change in the political color of the ruling party is a new dimension in the State politics.(1)

* Professor of Political Science, Commissionerate of College Education, Government of Rajasthan, Rajasthan, India.

In the background of this apparent asymmetry, there has been a long-standing demand from Meitis to be given the Schedule Tribe status under the Constitution of the country so that the restriction imposed upon them by the Land Reforms Act is removed and they would have access to the area inhabited by the tribal people at present. The tribals obviously see such demand as an intrusion into their traditional rights which they are determined to defend at all costs. Such was the uneasy balance between the two sides.(2)

Manipur High Court gave a verdict in April 2023 to the State government to take a decision on the demand by the Meities within a specific period of time. This sparked a widespread protest tribal people. The All Tribal Students Union of Manipur (ATSUM) took the lead and carried out large scale demonstrations, opposing the move of the government which was likely to be in favour of the majority community. Hundreds of people got killed in the violent protests and many more suffered injuries. The gravity of the situation was such that the Indian Army as well as the paramilitary forces were to be called to control the violence. Manipur is a State that is bordering Myanmar to the east and South. The illegal cross-border immigration has been a major issue for the State as the border with Myanmar is open. There have been concerns about reported smuggling of arms. In the year 2023, the government announced its intention to identify and remove the Myanmar illegal immigrants. This was seen by the Kukis and Nagas as a pretext tribal to oust tribal population from their land. (3)

During the violent protest in number of Kukis Christian churches and residences were attacked in the non-tribal area. This gave a communal colour to the demonstrations in addition to the tribal / non tribal conflict. Another aspect of this conflict has been that the MLAs of the ruling BJP have also supported the cause of the tribal people demanding a separate body to be created to administer the community under the Constitution of India. So, this cross-party politics has implications for the stability of the Party in power.(4)

Given the situation, differences on many issues notwithstanding, the State has been politically stable for a long time. That seems to have been fundamentally disrupted. The whole phenomenon of the Manipur problem has to be seen from at least five angles and perspectives.

One is the current situation of the tribal people in India.

Second is the history of the tribal movements.

Third is the current situation in Manipur.

Fourth is the relevance of the stereotypical conceptual approaches to study the tribal situation in the context of the erosion of remoteness consequent upon physical, knowledge, electronic connectivity and social media.

Fifth is the role of State and Politics in a situation of conflict.

Tribal Situation in India

Tribal politics has been a distinct chapter in Indian politics since a long time. In the years of colonial rule, there have been a number of tribal protest movements against the exploitative policies of the British empire. After Independence, tribal politics has revolved around two crucial issues i.e., survival and identity. The core issues, leading to conflicts and uprisings have been different from region to region. The range is quite wide. On the one hand is the Santhal rebellion on the one end includes Naxalite armed rebellion and now the latest violent protest in Manipur. (5)

The tribal people constitute nearly 8.6 of the total population of India. They are mostly concentrated in Eastern, central, north, eastern and western belts of India. Their presence is predominant substantial in nine States, i.e., Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya have a population of more than 50% i.e., 86.5%, 94.4% and 86.1 % respectively.(6)

The percentage of tribal population State wise is as below:

- Nagaland - 86.5,
- Meghalaya, 86.1,
- Mizoram, 94.4,
- Arunachal Pradesh, 68.8,
- Tripura, 31.8,
- Jharkhand, 26.2,
- Chhattisgarh, 30.6,

- Odisha, 22.8,
- Sikkim, 33.8,
- West Bengal, 5.1,
- Maharashtra 9.4,
- Andhra Pradesh, 7.0,
- Karnataka 7.0,
- Tamil Nadu, 1.1,
- Madhya Pradesh, 21.1,
- Gujarat, 14.8,
- Rajasthan, 13.5,
- Uttar Pradesh, 0.6,
- Uttarakhand, 2.9,
- Himachal Pradesh, 5.7,

There are large number of tribal communities including some which are called PTGs (Primitive Tribal Groups). The tribal communities recognized in the Constitution of India come under Schedule V. Article 365 defines Schedule Tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as deemed under Article 342 to be Schedule Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.” The Constitution gives power to the President of India to schedule or list particular community as under Article 342 to render them special protection. The fifth and sixth schedule of the Constitution have provisions for the nine States outside the Northeast and those in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram separately.(7)

Sociologists have studied the concept of tribe from different angles. The distinct cultural tradition and practice, close affinity with the hills and forest, unique language, et cetera have been listed out to define the distinctiveness of a tribal group. Sociologist like Verrier Elwin emphasized the unique culture of the tribal group that is distinct from the non-tribal groups. on the contrary, sociologist like Andre Beteille say that the difference between a caste or tribe in terms of their size, means of livelihood, isolation, religion is not clear . However, the Constitution of India clearly recognizes the distinctive cultural identity of the tribal groups and the need to preserve them. Many studies have established the fact that most of the tribal people reside in hills and forests and their livelihood is organically linked with the nature. The harmony between the tribal people of and their surroundings, including forests, rivers, minor forest produce has been there for centuries. At the same time many of such areas are rich in mineral resources. With the advent of industrialization introduced in India during colonial rule, large-scale mining, felling of trees, commercial plantation, construction of dams et cetera became the dominant priority of the colonial government. That caused enormous disruption, displacement and loss of traditional livelihood among tribes. This new concept of within bracket development came into direct conflict with the traditional tribal economy. As a consequence, in number of major tribal resistance and rebellion happened. Such protests and resistance forced the colonial government to make special provisions for the administration of the tribal areas. During the British rule, special administrative arrangements came into place that were visible in various Acts including the Government of India Act 1919. This act declared specific areas as tribal areas and in the same way, the Government of India Act, 1935 recognized exclusive and partially excluded areas that later became Scheduled areas. Such special administrative arrangements continued in Independent India. Also, reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in Parliament, State assemblies and services were provided for in article 330, 332 and 335.(8)

A lot of exercise has been done to work out the essential characteristics of community to be classified as Scheduled Tribe officially. According to the Lokur committee, 1965, the essential characteristics or indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, shyness of contact with the community at large, geographical isolation, and backwardness. After more than five decades, are these characteristics still relevant? From the point of view of development administration, lack of basic infrastructure for education, health and livelihood have become more important considerations. The access to sustainable sources of decent livelihood is still an issue, the guarantee of a decent standard of living for people who have been displaced by large projects like steel, plants, power projects, large dams is another issue that has come up after independence. The migration of tribals going to displacement has caused psychological problems.(9)

It has been found out in studies that the opening of the tribal belts to mining, industries and commercialization has exposed tribal Men and women to the ruthless operations of the market economy,

giving rise to consumerism and to commoditization of woman women. The traditional institutions and laws of the tribals have come into direct conflict with the modern institutions which have Created apprehensions among the tribals in preserving their identity. Extinction of tribal dialectics and languages also have happened across the tribal areas.(10)

Sarkari-Sahukari-Sahakari

Studies have also pointed out that the pathetic system continued even after Independence. The Government has taken a number of steps to vastly improve the physical infrastructure and programs have been launched to improve their socio-economic condition including education, health, self-employment, co-operative economic activities, provision of loan etc. If one visits the tribal area in any part of the country, one would see the black top roads, school and hospital buildings co-operative offices like LAMPS (Large Area Multi-Purpose Societies for collection of minor forest produce, provision of food items, loans) banks etc. However, the socio-economic indices have not improved considerably.

There have been large scale inputs that has led to impressive output in terms of creation of physical and social infrastructure, connectivity etc. but the outcome has been far from satisfactory. In the urban and semiurban centers in the Tribal area, one would notice shops selling clothes, local ornaments, medicine, electronic hoods, building materials, agricultural implements, restaurants etc. owned mostly by the non-tribals. Money lenders continue to be the main source of loan for the tribals both for productive as well as consumptive purposes. The price at which the consumption goods are sold in the markets in the vicinity of tribal villages are always much higher than the actual market price. In most of the tribal area local informal marketing events called "hat" are organized where the tribals come to sell their minor forest produce and other things. Interestingly, the local traders buy these products at a throw away price and sell the same items in the nearby markets at very high price. The tribal people have no choice as they have no idea about the prices in the urban markets. Many of the Government officers posted in the tribal area are corrupt and siphon of the funds coming for developments. They have turned some of the tribal youth as brokers for illegal gain.

Politically the tribals occupy elected positions in various levels. However, in remote areas they are unable to discharge their functions owing to lack of knowledge and exposure and hence the government officials virtually run the Panchayat Institutions, cooperative bodies, joint forestry management bodies etc. Decades ago, the sociologists concluded that the tribal population gets crushed under the triple burden of Sarkari-Sahukari-Sahakari i.e., the exploitative government officials, moneylenders and cooperative institutions. It has been observed based on empirical facts that the tribals have actually gained least and lost most from the six decades and democracy and development in India.(11)

The resistance to the exploitative and anti-tribal policies, practices and projects have happened in several ways. Tribals have joined hands with non-tribal rebellious groups. Naxalism is the most glaring example of such phenomenon. Peaceful sustained movements to protect tribal interest include Narmada Bachao Andolan and such other peaceful protest movements.

History of Tribal Movements in India:

- **Pahariyas Rebellion**

The martial Pahariyas of the Raj mahal Hills rose against the British rule in 1778 and forced the British to recognize the tribal rights.(12)

Second, the Chuar tribesmen of the Mahal jungle in the Midnapore district and Bankura district were forced to take up weapons during famine times against the intensive land revenue demands. The rebellion took place from 1766 to 1772 and again between 1795 and 1816.

The Chuars were prominent in Manbhum and Barabhum, especially in the hills between Barabhum and Ghatsila. Durjan Singh led the most important revolt in 1798.

Third is the Kol mutiny. Inhabitants of Chhotanagpur protested against the large-scale land transfers from Kol headmen to outsiders, such as oppressive Hindu, Sikh and Muslim farmers who demanded high taxes. Buddho, Bhagat gave leadership to this movement.

Fourth is the Ho and Munda uprisings between 1820 to 1837 and during 1899–1900. The Munda tribe in the South of Ranchi revolted under the leadership of Birsa Munda. Ulgulan was another significant tribal uprising in the period 1860 to 1920. The uprising which started as a religious movement gathered political power to fight against the introduction of zamindari tenures. Strong resentment against the moneylenders and forest contractors were the main issues in this conflict.

Fifth is the Santhal Rebellion (1855-56) that has been a landmark not only against the zamindars but against the East India Company Authority. The Santhals proclaimed independence from the Company and declared a region between Bhagalpur and Raj mahal under the leadership of Sidhu and Kanhu.

Sixth is the Khond uprisings between the year 1837 and 1856. This is another example of tribals revolting against the East India Company in the region between Odisha to Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Seventh is Koya Revolt between 1803 to 1862 and again between 1879 to 1880. These tribal people repeatedly rose against the new laws that denied their traditional rights over forest areas as well as exploitation by the money lenders.

Eighth is the Bhil revolts between 1817 to 1819. This again was a strong opposition to the East India Company during the famine. They challenged the exploitative governance that caused abject poverty.

Ninth is the Koli risings between 1829 to 1848. This was another example of revolt against the East India Company that caused poverty owing to alienation of means of production for livelihood.

Tenth is the Ramosi rising in the Western Ghats between 1825 to 1829. This uprising was against the annexation policy of the colonial rule that laid to loss of source of livelihood and unemployment.

Eleventh is the Khasi uprising in 1833. This uprising was against the outsiders who came to this region to work for a road connecting Brahamaputra Valley with Silhat during British rule. The protestors wanted to drive away the outsiders.

The above uprisings followed a clear pattern. Revolts were caused at a time in which the British rule disrupted the tribal traditional authority and destroyed their livelihood based on forest. The utterly exploitative policies of the British as well as the non-tribal Indian people was a constant feature of these protests movements. On the one hand the traditional political structures were destroyed and at the same time the new system proved to be exploitative. The tribal people did not accept this situation in a passive manner. Despite the fact that they were no match to the power and might of the East India Company, they nevertheless fought fiercely.

A number of studies have underlined the causes for tribal revolt during the British rule that includes large scale land alienation, uprooting the traditional tribal rights over the forest, exploitation by the forest officials, money lenders suppression of the tribal leadership and displacement of the tribal people following various types of construction activities.

Manipur at a Glance

Manipur is one of the eight north eastern States in India. The State comprises of multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious. According to the Census of India (2011), the total population of Manipur is 28.06 lacs people, out of which the tribals consist of 40.88% and the remaining population constitute the majority are Meiteis which include some outsiders like Nepali, Bengali, Bihari, and many others. Census of India (2011) recognized 29 tribes and there are also some unrecognized tribes in the State. The State comprises of three major communities: Meiteis, Nagas, and Kuki-Chin-Mizo. Politically, the members of the Manipur Legislative Assembly (MLA) consist of 60 seats, out of which 40 seats are represented by Meiteis (non-tribal), 19 seats are represented by Scheduled Tribes and the remaining 1 seat is represented by Meitei Scheduled Caste community. There are nine districts in Manipur: Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, and Thoubal are valley districts, dominated by Meiteis, and the hill districts, Ukhul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel are inhabited by the Nagas and Churachandpur by Kuki-Chin-Mizo group of tribes. Hindu, Christian, Pangan (Manipuri Muslim is called Pangan), and Sanamahi (Meitei traditional religion) are the four major religions in the State. Different ethnic groups have their own distinct language/dialect, tradition and culture.(13)

Literacy Rate in Manipur

Literacy scenario in Manipur is much better, when we compare the percentage of literacy rate of the State with other States in the country. It is fairly higher than the national standard of literacy rate. But when it draws closer to the quality of education, the State is lacking behind in evaluating with the rest of the States of the country. Many writers, scholars and academicians accept that literacy steers social development, and lead to economic progress. But the high rate of literacy does not get translated into economic progress in the State. According to Ganguly (2004), "It must also be noted that rises in literacy

levels as normally defined to mean the mere ability to read and write will not be adequate in today's Information age. Training of people in acquiring appropriate modern skills and receiving vocational education will make people economically productive" (Ganguly, 2004, p. 3).(14) The census of India (2011) depicts that; during 1991, Manipur had a total literacy rate of 60.96 percent (72.98 percent males and 48.64 percent females), and it rose to 66.53 percent (80.33 percent males and 60.53 percent females) in 2001. As per the 2011 census the literacy of the State is 76.94%, 83.58% among male and 70.26% among female. This is higher than corresponding figures for the country i.e., 72.98%, 80.88% and 64.63% respectively.

The literacy rates of the nine districts of Manipur as under;

- Imphal West – 86.08%
- Imphal East – 81.95%
- Ukhrul – 81.35%
- Bishnupur – 75.85%
- Thoubal – 74.47%
- Churachandpur – 82.78%
- Tamenglong – 70.05%
- Chandel – 71.11%
- Senapati – 63.6%

Higher Educational Institutes in Manipur

There are two central universities in Manipur: Central Agricultural University, it was established on 28 September, 1979 at Imphal, and Manipur University, established in the year 1980 at Chanchipur, Imphal. Manipur University was upgraded to Central Manipur University, in the year 2005. By 2010, there were 76 affiliated colleges to Central Manipur University, out of which there are six different types of affiliated colleges: 34 Affiliated Colleges, 18 Permanently Affiliated Private Colleges, 8 Government Aided Colleges, 7 Private Affiliated Colleges, 6 Permitted Private Colleges, and other higher educational institutions. Apart from its headquarter in Manipur, the Central Agricultural University expanded six colleges in five North East Region States with the introduction of different streams of agricultural studies in undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

There are two medical institutes namely: Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), established on 22 October, 1968, at Lamphelpat (Imphal), having 30 departments and 21 post-graduate subjects, and Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS), established in the year 1989, at Porompat (Imphal). Six major Nursing Schools and Colleges were established; these nursing institutes offer Undergraduate and Diploma Courses. Besides, there are some nursing schools which offer diploma courses at high school (10) & higher secondary school (10+2) levels.

Three technical institutes are Government Polytechnic (Imphal), Manipur Institute of Technology (Imphal), and Government College of Technology (Imphal). Seven Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), with its regional headquarter situated at Imphal. The Adult Education, under the scheme of National Literacy Mission (NLM) was established in the year 1988 at Imphal, by the Government of India. Six professional Teacher Training Colleges; these teacher training colleges introduced Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) Courses, and only three Law Colleges situated in Imphal, Oinam and Churachandpur. Out of the total universities, general colleges, vocational and professional institutes, only one professional college i.e. (Law College) and some general colleges are situated in hill districts.

Status of the Educated Unemployed Youth

The Annual Plan (2006-2007), Planning Department, Government of Manipur, the educated unemployment in Manipur has been rapidly increasing year after year (see table 3). During 1994, there were total number of 168,391 persons of educated unemployment and it was increased to 315,016 persons in 2005. Among the three educational levels; Matriculate, Under-Graduate and Graduate & Above in the State, Matriculate got the highest number of 101,497 persons of educated unemployment in the year 1994 and the numbers were increasing year after year. It was followed by Under-Graduate level with the total number of 34,415 persons of educated unemployment in the year 1994, and increased to 75,842 persons of educated unemployment in 2005. During 1994, Graduate & Above was the least in number of 32,479 persons of educated unemployment and it increased Educated unemployed youth in Manipur International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology 67 to 55,349 persons of educated unemployment in the year 2005.

Table 1: Estimated number of educated unemployment in Manipur from 1994-2005

Educational Level	Year - 1994	Year – 1996	Year - 1998	Year - 2005
Matriculate	101,497	118,537	151,224	183,825
Under-Graduate	34,415	40,795	57,801	75,842
Graduate and above	32,479	32,363	48,809	55,349
Total Educated	168,391	191,693	257,834	315,016

Table 2 depicted that, out of total 66.53 percent of literacy rate in Manipur (2001), the State attained 12.85 percent in Higher Secondary and Above with the total number of 278,328 persons. Among the districts; Imphal West got the highest rate of 22.19 percent, and it was followed by Imphal East, Bishnupur, and Thoubal districts. Ukhrol district got fifth position at the rate of 9.78 percent whereas Tamenglong district had the least of 5.51 percent. The valley districts had attained higher percentage in Higher Secondary and Above, and among the hill districts, Ukhrol scored the highest percentage. Census of India (2001) also depicted that, in Manipur, only 142 persons were taking up the streams of non-technical diploma or certificate which is not equal to degree and 2,278 persons in technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree.

Table 2: District-wise total persons and percentage of attaining higher secondary and above in Manipur-2001

State/District	Males	Females	Total Persons	Males	Females	Total Percentage
Manipur	168,587	109,741	278,328	15.39	10.25	12.85
Imphal West	55,872	42,723	98,595	25.19	19.19	22.19
Imphal East	36,190	25,044	61,234	18.24	12.74	15.51
Bishnupur	17,244	10217	27461	16.49	9.84	13.18
Thoubal	25,286	13439	38725	13.87	7.39	10.63
Senapati	5,634	3010	8644	7.02	3.95	5.52
Tamenglong	4,131	2022	6153	7.12	3.78	5.51
Churachandpur	10,686	5030	15716	9.12	4.54	6.90
Chandel	5,093	3163	8035	8.15	5.39	6.79
Ukhrol	8,672	5093	13765	11.80	7.56	9.78

The website of the Director of Commerce and Industries, Manipur Informatics Officer, NIC Manipur, on 7 April, 2011, States that, "A high rate of unemployment exists in Manipur, particularly among the educated youth. According to the Live Register of Employment Exchange, the total number of educated job-seekers were recorded as 583.65 thousands as on 31st March, 2007, as against 548.70 thousands as on 31st March, 2006 showing an increase of 6.37 percent over the previous year and 605.84 thousands educated job seekers were recorded as on 31st March 2008, with an increase of 3.80 percent over 2007."(15) On the other hand, according to the Report of the Department of Higher and Technical Education, Govt. of Manipur (2007), after the State-run Manipur University was upgraded to Central Manipur University in the year 2005, the tenth plan (2005-2006) approved the total outlay of Rs. 6516 lakhs (i.e. 2.32 percent from the total State annual budget) for the development of University and Higher Education in Manipur, and it was increased to Rs. 117644.90 lakhs in the year 2006-2007. It showed that, due to shortage of financial allocation, it is difficult to expand the quality of higher education in the State. Consortia Academia Publishing The Report from the Directorate of Employment Exchange, Imphal (Manipur); till September 2008, the total number of educated unemployed youths in the State was 633,451 persons (459,806 males and 173,645 females). To analyze the district-wise educated unemployment youths by descending orders are as follows; Imphal West, Thoubal, Imphal East, Churachandpur, Bishnupur, Senapati, Ukhrol, Chandel, Tamenglong districts, and physically handicapped had the lowest number of educated unemployment youths of 2354 persons in the State (see table 5). Over all, the educated unemployed youths were increased to nearly seven lakhs by the month of August 2010, with the total number of 683,454 persons of educated unemployment youths (494,456 males and 188,998 females) in the State. In modern generation, the educated unemployed youths have been increasing year after year by outnumbering the current employed youths in the State.

Table 3: Numbers of district-wise educated unemployed youths in Manipur 2010

State/District	Males	Females	Total Persons
Manipur	494,456	188,998	683,454
Imphal West	153,517	67,504	221,025
Imphal East	72,465	28,749	101,218
Bishnupur	45,826	16,056	62,882
Thoubal	82,792	21,903	104,695
Senapati	36,397	13,933	50,330
Tamenglong	15,668	4,913	20,581
Churachandpur	45,956	15,696	61,652
Chandel	17,232	7,964	25,196
Ukhrul	19,256	8,546	27,802
Physically Handicapped	1594	760	2,354

Causes of Unemployment among Educated Youths

There is a lack of quality higher educational institution that offers different kinds of global education which is based on technology. The existing general colleges in the State run the indifferent subjects which are based on traditional society; the syllabus is out-of-date to compare with the global competitive education. In fact, the State lost huge quantity of human resources which are supposed to bring economic development. Majority of the students continue to follow up pursuing arts stream while few enrolments in sciences, commerce, mathematics, engineering, information technology and other subjects that can release the burden of economic backwardness due to non-available and low quality in functioning for the namesake. The student lacks basic knowledge in various streams of professional and vocational education because of non-existent or rareness in establishment of these types of educational institutes in the State. Besides, poverty, scarcity of career guidance and counseling center, which is one of the most important necessary needs for the student to follow up the particular stream of education that is suitable and give interest according to the capability of the student. Over and above; it resulted in raising the high rate of graduate-unemployment youths while in contradiction, the production of high-skill educated youths were very low in the State. Most of the educated unemployed youths acquired skills in education sector of the State do not permit them to work in the metropolitan cities where many job vacancies are available in industries, organizations, companies, corporate sectors, etc. It is due to the social irrelevant skills attained by the educated youths in the State. NPE (1986) States, "Another system of higher Educated unemployed youth in Manipur International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology 69 education with the same total output but producing a large proportion of indifferently educated graduates of arts, many of whom remain unemployed or are even are unemployable, could create social tensions and retard economic growth. It is only the right type of education, provided on an adequate scale that can lead to national development; when these conditions are not satisfied, the opposite effect may result"(16). Application of information technology/educational technology in education system is flourishing every nook and corner of the world but the State is lacking behind from this system where education is confined mainly in theory with very limited of practical session.

Politicization

Most of the State government departments in the State from the highest down to the lowest levels are unseen of merit, fairness and transparency in governance. Bribery, corruption, power and money played powerful roles in order to get employment in the State or else there is no other option. The political leader and bureaucrat are the key persons to decide whom to offer vacant the post. The more amounts of cash flows into the hand of the political leader by the candidate, the better preference and opportunity to get the vacant position of the State government departments. To quote from Singh (2011), "The estimated rates for various post are discussed in private conversations range between Rs 3-4 lakh for a primary teacher, Rs 10-15 lakh for a sub-inspector/assistant SI of police, up to 15 lakh for a supervisor (women and child welfare), and Rs 15-25 lakh (or even higher) for a State civil services post." (17) It has become the elite culture of the State. The educated youth with brilliant academic performance without cash and political link has no chance to get the require position. The political godfather involvement in government-run educational institutes like transferring, promotion, etc. of teachers in the inappropriate situation, without examining the condition of the particular educational institute hurt the education sector very harshly. According to the Report of The Manipur State Higher Education

Commission, Part I (2003), "Many teachers get away with absenteeism, irresponsibility even with misconduct because they have political godfathers. Politicians interfere routinely in transfers and postings of Government college teachers"(18). The problems of education and employment are fallout of a larger problem of cultural upheaval, political unrest, and socio-economic stagnation that has gripped the systems. A public meeting was organized by the Coordinating Committee of Manipur, on 05 July 2011, in the topic of 'Free Education Zone' at Palace Compound, Imphal, in order to prevent Politicizing of Education in the State. It States in the agenda to make 'Education a Corruption Free Zone' and also the meeting also taken up the agenda of 'Exempting the Educational Institutions and Office' from the purview of any bandh or general strike. Singh (2011) States, "Education, thus, has been devalued by the government leadership for several decades. Manipur is at present driven by the power of might, force, gun and money without the rule of law. There is scant regard for education and no respect for human rights and basic needs of the people".(19) The meeting was not much effective due to absence of political policy makers of the State. On the other hand, different types of militant groups in the State make monetary gain through ransom, extortion, demand cash upon educational institutions, commercial centre, State departments, etc. However, the main problem of financial governance in the State is the failure of paying monthly salary on time to the servants of the State government whereas the non-regular appointees' salary had been pending for long durations or throughout the year.

Inequality in Education

"At all levels of the education system governance is a crucial issue. The arrangements that are in place for representation and participation in consultation, decision making and governance may be potential source of conflict, or they may be opportunities for inclusion and resolution of grievances. Arrangement for transparency and accountability also reflects the system's capacity to accept and address inequalities that might otherwise become source of conflict".(20) The tribals are the worse affected when one examines closely the condition of the State. Educationally, out of the total establishment of government run educational institutes in the State, the tribal populated district, Churachandpur has got the Consortia Academia Publishing highest number of six colleges, followed by Senapati with five colleges, three colleges in Chandel, Tamenglong, and Ukhul districts have only one college each with pathetic condition of running the colleges. The Report of the Higher Education Commission (2003) also States, "The commission finds that there is a great disparity in infrastructure development between colleges in the hills and the valley and also colleges in the urban and the rural areas of the valley. This disparity has affected higher education adversely, particularly in the hills where even the basic infrastructure and the minimum teaching staff are found lacking"(21). The youths in valley districts are somehow getting better opportunities and they are more advance in different streams of education since, majority of the higher educational institutions are available in their vicinity and at walking distance. In hill areas, the subjects introduced were only three options Arts, Science and Commerce. Among the three subject options, the enrolments of students are very high in Arts stream whereas enrolments of students in Science and Commerce streams are very low because there were lack of educational infrastructures and shortage of qualified faculties. Likewise, the absence of Principal or Vice-Principal in the government run educational institute by deputed senior teacher as in-charge, lack of inspection, loose administration, etc. These agents deteriorated the education system and lead to null-student enrolment in Science stream, which is evident from Ukhul Higher Secondary School (Ukhul district), Pettigrew College (Ukhul district), etc. which is similar to all the hill districts of the State. In addition, the government runs professional and vocational institutes do not exist in the hill districts and all the government department headquarters are also based in valley districts where the dominant populations are employed with few minorities in the State. Therefore, it resulted in high production of educated unemployed youths in the hills district rather than valley districts. To take a closer look at recruitment of jobs in the State government departments, the reservation of seats for tribals are not implemented equally. The apex tribals student body in Manipur, All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur, on 4 November, (2008) States, "The attitude of the Government of Manipur as well as the authorities of the university has severely marginalized the tribals, which is evident in the area of education as well as other areas too".(22) According to the population of the State, tribal consists of 34 percent; the remaining 66 percent are Meiteis with some (migrant) outsider. The State reserved only 7.5 percent to the tribals which leads to contradiction in participation of administration and deprivation of developmental activities. It causes bitter relationship between the tribals and Meiteis within the State. The apex Nagas student body, All Naga Students' Association, Manipur and the Nagas mother organization, Naga Women's Union (2012), in Manipur against the State partiality of development, "Manipur Government also denied quality education, health services, job reservation, service promotion and infrastructural development to the

tribals”(23). Besides, the Naga Youth Front, on 02 June 2010, also States, “In the recent recruitment of teachers under the district councils of the hills, 552 posts out of 1600 reserved vacant posts have been given to Meiteis.”(24). The process of equal tribals participation and inclusive policy system is unfamiliar in Manipur. Vidyasagar (2007) States, “As part of the systemic crisis, this governance crisis refers to the range of political, socio, social economic and administrative systems that are in place to adjust the development and management of resources and provision of services to different communities of society. In other word it is a systemic crisis, and thus, not confined to one or more sectors as such. Obviously, the problems such as scarce and inadequate supply of educational infrastructure, inequitable distribution due to incompatible policy decisions affected the content and quantity of supply to the stakeholders. Improving the quality of this service delivery, improving reliability and equity in distribution were undeniable factors and advocating for transfer of existing centralized systems to localized clients”(25) Educated unemployed youth in Manipur International Journal of Research Studies in Educational Technology.

Due to the absence of global educational technology in the system of imparting education, it resulted in production of hefty number of educated unemployed youths that remains unemployed within the State and other places of the country where many production centers are established is the major issue in the State. The present problems of rising in educated unemployed youths in the State also represent the crisis in politics of governance from top to the bottom levels. This disaster affected badly upon the innocent youths of the State and of which the tribal youths got deeper negative impact. If youths are the pillar of tomorrow’s generation, where is the scope for educated youth to bring economic development in the future generation? This poisonous system of governance can infect upon today’s youths, if the educated youths follow the same path that is existing in the current State. Education relying on modern technology with social relevance is the best policy to achieve the target of one’s desire as well as it can solve the economic burden.

These conceptual and factual background are immensely relevant to understand and analyze the clash between Meitei and Kuki population in Manipur,

Conceptual Approaches to Study the Tribal Situation

The traditional theoretical approaches towards the tribal issues have centered around the concepts of isolation, assimilation and integration. These three conceptual approaches have influenced the policy towards tribals in India for a long time. The isolation approach has its origin in the sociological studies of the pre independence period by the British Sociologist, the most notable among them being Verrier Elwin. Elwin studied Baiga community in the year 1939 and concluded that the tribal people living in remote hills and forests have their own distinct noble culture and a way of life close to the nature. They are vulnerable from the people leaving in the plains who are far more stronger. Hence, he emphasized upon the need to protect the culture and the economics space of the tribals. The second point of view treated the tribals groups as part of the overall national mainstream and that they should be assimilated into the main land culture. Sociologist like G.S. Ghurye criticized that the British were responsible to create the distinction between the tribes and the non-tribes. He treated the tribal groups as part of the Indian Civilization that need to be absorbed.

The third approach of integration aims at integrating tribals society into the national mainstream gradually without interfering in their cultural practices. The Constituent Assemble had formed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Thakkar Bapa who recommended this policy which was later concretized by Jawaharlal Nehru. So, this approach emphasized that it was necessary for the tribals groups to develop a not remain isolated, yet the integration should happen in a smooth and spontaneous manner. This policy dominated in a foreword to the second addition of Elwin’s book, A Philosophy for Nefa in 1959, Nehru came out with Panch Sheel or five principles on this concept of integration.

However, the approaches of these schools of thoughts are no more adequate to understand and analyze the emerging situation and complex matrix in Manipur. Physical connectivity, knowledge connectivity, electronic connectivity and cultural connectivity may be seen as four major factors that has brought the tribal and non-tribal people much closer than earlier.

Firstly, the hilly region of the State is no more isolated and remote. Tribal region is today physically connected. Physical connectivity is visible that has been made possible by the network of National Highways, all-weather roads, dedicated electricity and power supply, etc. Although the constitutional provision of sixth Schedule has not been implemented in the hills to the satisfaction of its people and there is a wide gap between the valley and the hills, physical connectivity has still been substantial. Social infrastructure has also remarkably improved in health and education sector.

Secondly, knowledge connectivity has happened through the establishment of schools, colleges and other educational institutions that impart same education throughout the States to both the groups. The formal education system has enabled the youth to have opportunity to study the same subjects. Literacy rate has gone up substantially and the State is now in the leading position in terms of literacy rate.

Thirdly, electronic connectivity has given access to the world of information first through electronic devices such as radio and television and later through information technology. Information and communication technology has given access to everyone, including the tribal people to knowledge about everything on the earth. Recently the access of most of the tribal people to smartphones has dramatically bridged the gap of knowledge between the tribal and non-tribal people. Such phenomenon has had a dramatic impact on the world view of both. Nowadays, both tribal and non-tribal youths see the same channels in television use the Apps like WhatsApp, Facebook to share experiences and view and watch similar programs for entertainment. This has impacted the life style and the world view to such an extent that today the youth wear the clothes of same fashion, grow hair in same style and communicate through same language learnt from the social media. In fact, today's youth are increasingly becoming homogenous world-citizens. Such cultural assimilation has been an outcome of the fact that the information technology and social media dominate the mindset and thinking of the youth in the same way as never before.

Cultural connectivity is visible owing to the unprecedented phenomena discussed above. Specially the youth have adopted new ways of life and living and electronic connectivity has enabled to close the gap between the two groups.

In view of the above, the socio-political study of the tribal situation has to veer away from the traditional analytical tools. The binary stereotypical approach of studying the tribal situation through the perspective of "hilly people vrs. outsiders," "assimilation – integration", "guns against arrow", has become largely irrelevant. Hence, in Manipur it is now a clash between two secular pressure groups – one trying to defend the traditional rights against the intrusion of the outsiders and the other trying to grab more resources. The situation is asymmetrical. On the one hand the size of the population of the Meitis compared to Kukis and Nagas are quite close i.e., 53% and 40%. The political strength of Meitis is far stronger today and recently the communal diversity of the State is turning into confrontation between two divided groups. The ethnic clash of May 2023 is not a sudden development in reaction to any particular incident. The tension between the two groups was growing much before. It took an unrepresented turn of confrontation following the sharp political division between the hilly people and those staying in the valley. That has sharpened the perception of discrimination and alienation among the tribal people. As a result, it has led to erosion of the legitimacy and credibility of the present government among the tribals.

Another important factor in this incident is that it was led not by any charismatic leader or political group, but it was led by the youths and the students. Protestors are often painted as disruptors, terrorists, and a nuisance, yet across the world demonstration and direct action have been seen as a vital form of political engagement throughout the world. Normally, any mass revolt is expected to have a charismatic leader, a well-knit organization, a strong ideology and committed followers. But in this case, it was a sporadic intense protest that happened spontaneously. Its future depends upon the way it is led because usually the temper in such sudden protest does not last for long. It is expected that some leadership will emerge to give direction to this revolt in the near future. Another factor in the conflict is the common border with Myanmar. The cross-border moment with people belonging to Kuki-Chin tribe has made the conflict more complicated. The smuggling of arms to fuel the militants is a reality.

In this background if the current syndrome is to be addressed, the concerns of the various groups and the causes behind the sudden explosive situation that happened in the recent past has to be carefully dealt with. The volatile and explosive nature of the role of the youth has to be understood and addressed very carefully. It is important that the youth of both the sides are made part of the process of political negotiations. It is quite clear that higher education and social media on the one hand and unemployment on the other has made the youth anomic. They feel alienated and such desperation leads to disruptive behavior with a sense of vengeance. Long term policies to address the problems of employment and livelihood has to be an integral part of the package of the measures to achieve long term stability in the State.

Use of force to control the situation and imposition of special laws giving arbitrary powers to the authority could be a short-term intervention to prevent further worsening of the violence situation. Negotiation and positive action are the only possible response. Political system has a crucial role in such

situations. Politics is an art of reaching non-coercive compromise between competing interest in a way such that the different groups consider the outcome as just and legitimate. Restoration of legitimacy of the authority could come only if the political process enjoys autonomy and is not captured by any single interest group. Hence, the Manipur-2023 situation is basically a political conflict between two groups of people that are fighting for their secular interest.

The challenge before the political system is to respond by credible, autonomous process of negotiation to ensure long term redressal of the core issues of conflict. Whether the present State Government is in a position to perform this task or there is a need to create new institutions for this needs to be considered carefully. Ultimately, institutionalization of a political process that has the ability, legitimacy and autonomy is the challenge before the political system.

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