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**Ethnic Conflict in Manipur: Cause and Prospects for Resolution.**

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The Land and the People

Manipur, a trans-Indo-Mayanmar border state is located in the extreme North-East corner of India bordering Myanmar, in the east, Cachar district of Assam in the west, state of Mizoram and Nagaland, in the south and north, respectively. It lies between a Latitude of 23°83' N, and 25°68' N and Longitude of 93°78' E and 94°78' E. There is a small low lying fertile valley at the centre which the Meites dearly called, 'Sanaleibak' (land of the jewels). It constitutes some 10% of the total geographical area of 22,347 sq. km. surrounded by blue hills and mountains constituting 90% of the total land area. The indigenous people of Manipur belong to Mongoloid racial stock of different and diversified ethnic groups with diversified culture, religion, language etc. However, all the languages spoken by different ethnic groups in Manipur belong to the same Tibeto-Burman group of languages. The Meiteis, the dominant ethnic group in the state occupied the central low lying fertile valley and their population constitutes roughly 55% of the total 2,570,390 population of the state as per 2011 census. A sizeable Meitei people also live in the Jiriban sub-division of the bordering of the Cachar district of Assam. The Meiteis, though have their own indigenous religion "Sanamahi" are predominantly Hindu. The Meitei-Pangals who constitute some 8% of the total populations and who are professing Islam as their religion also live in the central valley side by side with the Meiteis.

In the hills surrounding the valley, there live a number of hill tribes belonging to two main ethnic families-The Nagas and the non-Nagas or Kuki-Chin-Zomi/Mizo ethnic family. The Nagas, belonging to different tribes are found living in the Senapati district, Tamenglong district and Ukhrul District whereas the Kuki-Mizo/Zomi group are found living in the Churachandpur district, Sadar Hills in Senapati district, some parts of Chandel and Ukhrul districts. There are at present 29 constitutionally recognized tribes in the state. Both the two tribal ethnic groups, the Nagas and the Non-Nagas or Kuki-Zomi/Mizo groups are Christians by faith. The total population of the hills tribes, both Nagas and Kuki-Zomi/Mizo group constitutes roughly 38% of the total population of the state, which means 38% of the population live in 90% of the total geographical area of the state.

Conflicts in Manipur is essentially ethnic conflicts between and among the three major ethnic groups; the Meiteis, The Nagas and the non-Nagas Kuki-Zomi/Mizo groups. There are also instances of intra-ethnic conflicts within Kuki-Zomi/Mizo ethnic family in the 1960's between the Thadou Kukis and the Hmars, and in 1967-1968, between the Zomis and the Kukis. Also in the plain, there was Meiteis- Meitei-Pangal, ethnic conflict in 1993 for a brief period resulting to the death of 150 people from both side.

The Meitei- Naga Conflict (Cold War)

The conflict between Meiteis and the Nagas in Manipur is not as yet on open armed conflict, but it is a kind of cold war resulting from conflict of interests and goals due to different interpretation of history. The persistent demand for integration of the Naga dominated districts of Manipur with Nagaland by NSCN (IM) and the demand for alternative arrangement (AA) by United Naga Council(UNC), the apex decision making body of the

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Nagas of Manipur, outside Manipur are making the Meiteis apprehensive of the possible territorial fragmentation of Manipur. The Nagas, asserting the uniqueness of their history, maintain that before the annexation of the British, they were never ruled over by any power, including the Maharaja of Manipur. It was, they maintained, the British who, divided their land purely for their administrative convenience. The Nagas, therefore, wanted the integration of Naga dominated districts in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh with existing state of Nagaland; and create Nagalim, the state with maximum power, if not sovereign. The NSCN (IM), which entered into a cease-fire agreement with the Government of India in 1997 has been persistently insisting that any solution to Naga problem should include the territorial integration of Naga dominated areas in bordering Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. 17 Years has passed by now, no solution to the vexed Naga issue is insight as yet, basically on territorial integration issue. On more than three occasions, the talk between the two negotiating parties broke down due to the persistent demand of NSCI (IM) for the creation of Nagalim by amalgamating all Naga inhabited areas of the region. On June, 14, 2001, the Government of India extended the territorial jurisdiction of cease-fire between the two beyond the boundary of Nagaland which sparked widespread violent protest in valley areas of Manipur. Agitations were organized by different organizations, including an influential United Club of Manipur (UCM). The protest in the capital city of Imphal turned violent and the mob started burning a building of Manipur Legislative Assembly. The security personnel, to control the violent mob, opened fire and killed 18 strikers and injuring many more. The Government of India, then issued an order limiting the territorial jurisdiction of the cease fire to be operative only within the state of Nagaland. The government of Manipur, to subside the violent protest, declared June 18 as 'State Integrity Day' in honor of 18 persons killed into police firing.

In the meantime, the ANSAM (All Naga Students' Association, Manipur), imposed 52 days-long economic blockage in protest against the declaration of June 18 as 'State Integrity Day'. The two NH. 39 and 53, the only two life-lines of Manipur connecting the state with the rest of the country were totally cut off; and soon the state was running out of essential commodities, including life-saving drugs. The Indian Air Force was, then pressed into service to provide the most urgently needed essential items. Within three months, the violent protest and counter protest in the areas dominated by the two communities, somehow, subsided, but without a solution to the problem causing the protest. The UNC and other Naga civil societies maintained that the declaration of 18 June, 2001 by the Government of Manipur was a surrender of the Government to those who were involved in the act of violent protest. Relations between the two major communities in Manipur have been further strained by the extension of cease-fire jurisdiction between NSCN (IM) and Government of India and the subsequent violent reaction by the dominant Meitei community in the valley. The psychological war between the two major committees was further intensified when Th. Muivah, the General Secretary of NSCN (IM) made a failed attempt to visit his native village, Somdal in Ukhrul district of Manipur in May, 2010. While the Government of India had given a green signal to the visit, the Government of Manipur was all prepared for blocking Th. Muivah from visiting Manipur and sent state police commandos and IRB to Mao gate to enforce the restriction on Th. Muivah. In the meantime, different Naga organizations rose up against barring of NSCN (IM) leader from visiting his native village. The Protest turned violent on May, 6 2010, the day when the Muivah was to pass through Mao gate. Two students were killed and some 90 civilians were wounded when the security forces opened fire on Naga protestors. There was widespread protests and condemnations by civil societies and organizations, both in Nagaland and in Naga dominated districts of

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Manipur. They maintained that the Government of India has miserably failed to deal with the state-government of Manipur in appropriate manner according to its commitment in the eye of the world as a nation. The entire world, they maintained, was surprised over the question of cease-fire coverage or so called territorial limit raised by puppet Manipur government. The Nagas, writes H. Sosu, a social worker from Nagaland, "Feel disappointed to see over all the situation and system prevailing in the country. The people were completely landed into confusion stage and frustration at the Mao Gate incident of 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2010, where two innocent student lives were lost"

Following the Mao gate incident and the repeated broke down of peace negotiation between the government of India and the NSCN (IM) on Naga integration issue, the UNC (United Naga Council) started demanding Alternative Arrangement (AA) outside Manipur which could be interpreted as having two implications- a separate state or union territory or to plug off Naga inhabited districts from Manipur and merge with the state of Nagaland. The UNC and ANSAM immediately announced shivering of tie with the government of Manipur and started a campaign for boycotting the government of Manipur, including Board of Secondary Education, Manipur in all Naga inhabited districts; and asked all schools to apply for affiliation with Nagaland Board of Secondary Education. The Nagaland Assembly, in reciprocation, passed a bill allowing affiliation of out of state schools with Nagaland Board of Secondary Education in 2007. As a counter measure to this development, government of Manipur issued an ordinance banning any educational institution or school within the state from affiliation with any board of secondary education, outside the state without obtaining prior permission from the government of Manipur.

All these developments and the demand for Alternative Arrangement (AA) outside Manipur has tremendously contributed to the furthering of strained relation of the already strained relation between the two communities. Again, following the killing of ADC members, NgalanzarMalue on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2014, by militants in Ukhrul district, the government of Manipur deployed heavy security forces in the districts to trace the killers and imposed 144CRPC in town. The state government suspected the hands of NSCN (IM) for the killing and a camp of NSCN (IM) was busted. The security forces were accused of high handedness during operation and while enforcing 144 CRPC and curfew. The heavy deployment of security forces and their high handedness were much resented by civil bodies of Ukhurl and the UNC. In protest against the excessive use of force and the continued impose of curfew and 144 CRPC, the UNC organized a peace rally in all Naga inhabited district headquarters. While, the rallies in other district passed off without violent, the rally at Ukhrul turned violent as security forces tried to prevent the rally. Ascufflebroke out between the protestors and the security forces, the security forces opened fire on the protestors killing 2 and injuring 10 more. The protest rally was organized by UNC against the heavy deployment of security forces in Ukhrul which it said, was against the Indo-Naga cease-fire agreement.

Words of condemnation are pouring in from different Naga organization, both within and outside Manipur. Even UCM, the most vocal civil society in the valley condemned the excessive use of force and heavy deployment of security force at Ukhrul. The UNC, in the meantime, submitted a fresh memorandum to the PrimeMinister demanding making an Alternative Arrangement for the Nagas and asking for his intervention in the Ukhrul crisis. The Government of Manipur, on the advice of the Union Home Minister, consequently withdraws 144CRPC and a bulk of security forces form Ukhrul.Situation, now started becoming normal with uneasy calm.

As seen in the preceding discussions, it could be seen that the core problem between the Nagas of Manipur on the one hand, and the government of Manipur and Mitei civil societies on the other, is the possible disintegration of Manipur. The persistent demand of Manipur Nagas for Alternative Arrangement outside Manipur and the persistent demand of NSCN (IM) for integration of Naga inhabited districts of Manipur with the state of Nagaland, has been strongly opposed by Meiteis both undergrounds and overgrounds. Be it 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 uprising, the Mao gate killing or the Ukhul turmoil etc, they are directly or indirectly related Naga political issue for Naga integration and Meiteis' uncompromising stand for the territorial integrity of Manipur at all cost. There seems to be no easy solution to the problem until and unless both are ready to accept the principle of give and take.

#### Naga-Kuki Ethnic Armed Conflict:

The conflict between Nagas and Kukis is basically a conflict over land. Communities in 1992 and, somehow, subsided in the early 1994. The conflict, though was referred to as, Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict, it was more or less a conflict between the Thadou speaking Kukis and the Nagas. The conflict, nevertheless, affected in one way or the other tribe of the Zomi/Kui/Mzio group living in different parts of the state. The Kuki-Paite/Zomi conflict, in fact, was the resultant effect of the Naga-Kuki conflict in other districts of the state. There are a number of factors responsible for the outbreak of open armed conflict between the two major tribal communities of Manipur. Though the two were traditional foe, the immediate cause of the conflict between the two communities 1992-1994 was exclusive claim and counter claim of ownership rights over land. While the Nagas claimed exclusive ownership right of Senapati, Ukhul, Temanglong and Chandel Districts of the state, the Thadou speaking Kukis who also live in certain pockets of these districts refused to accept the lordship of Nagas on the lands they inhabited in these districts. The existence of numerous ethnic based armed outfits as protagonists of such claims and counter claims; extortion of home land taxes; of quit notices served by one group to another; fight for control over resources; disagreements on sharing of development funds; inefficient administration; lack of effective law and order machinery; poor governance and so on, are collectively responsible for the outbreak of armed conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis of Manipur in the 1990's.

The conflict between Nagas and Kukis, particularly, the Thadou speaking Kukis, once started spread like a wildfire causing death and destructions to the communities. Thousands of lives were lost, thousands more injured and thousands were made permanently impaired. Tens' of thousands were made refugees in their own home land. The economic cost of the conflict was enormous considering the economic conditions of the effected people. It has created a deep sense of hatred against one another. The conflict, somehow, could subside from the middle of 1994, but the two communities are still pointing fingers at one another for violation of human rights and dignity during the conflict.

As pointed out in the preceding discussions, the immediate cause of the conflict is over exclusive ownership right over land. Overlapping of claim and counter claim; and divergent political demands of the two communities is causing enmity between the two warring tribes. The Nagas, while demanding Naga-integration including all the Naga dominated districts- Senapati, including Sadar Hills where majority residents are Kukis, Ukhul, Chandel, Temanglong districts, to be included in proposed Nagalim or Alternative

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Arrangement for the Nagas outside Manipur, the Kukis living in these districts resisted the inclusion of their areas of habitation in the proposed arrangement as demanded by the Nagas. Here lies the cause of the hostile misunderstanding leading to such a devastating opened armed conflict.

The political aspiration of the Nagas is clear and need no err-iteration. It is a demand for the Nagas integration or creation of an administrative arrangement exclusively for the Nagas outside Manipur. The Kukis, on the other hand have their own political aspiration, a political arrangement for the creation of Kuki homeland, precisely separate Kuki state for all the Kuki/Mizo/Zomi ethnic family of Manipur. Recently, a Kuki State Demand Committee (KSDC) was formed for the purpose of pursuing "Kuki Homeland or Zalengam". It was setup with the support of the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), the most-well organized and well-disciplined armed outfit of all Kuki nomenclature based armed organizations. It has now been under Suspension of Operating with the Government of India (SOO) along with United Peoples' Front (UPF), a conglomeration of different armed groups, headed by Zomi Revolutionary Organisation (ZRO), a well-armed, well-disciplined and well organized underground group in Manipur fighting for the re-unification of all Zomis ethnic groups living in Myanmar, India and Babgladesh.

The Suspension of Operation (SOO) was between the Government of India and state government of Manipur on the one hand, and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People Front (UPF) a conglomeration of armed groups not included under KNO, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2008 under certain set of rules was represented by DS Poonia, Principal Secretary Government of Manipur and Naveen Verma, Jt. Secretary (North-East), Minister of Home Affairs, on behalf of State and Central Government respectively. A Joint Monitoring Committee was also formed among the signatories headed by Principal Secretary, Government of Manipur. Other members include JGP (Intelligent), Government of Manipur, Department of Home, Government of India, CPO's, Army and the two underground groups. Some of the ground rules set for suspension of operation were:

- (1) The constituents of UPF and KNO will abide by the Constitution of India, the law of the land and the territorial integrity of Manipur.
- (2) Members of the two armed groups shall not involve in all kinds of atrocities and extortion.
- (3) Construction of designated camps, depositing of arms under a double looking system and financial assistance for the UGS, and.
- (4) Submission of the list and recent photographs of all cadres along with their bio-data. In pursuance this, all cadres will be issued identity cards etc.

With the exception of some splinter incidents of violation of certain ground rules, there was no major problem in so far as the implementation of the above points of agreement signed, which, however, were settled in a manner acceptable to the parties involved. However, the demand of Kuki led by KSDC, which is seemingly going against point no.1 of the ground rule which could potentially be an issue of contention since the creation of Kuki Homeland or Zalengam (Kuki State) would mean, the territorial disintegration of Manipur. Moreover, if the demand is to be conceded, it is likely to be resisted by the Nagas in Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Temanglong districts and possibly, even in Churachandpur district by the Zomis who are the majority in the district where there are overlapping of claims.

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The Meiteis who are bent on protection of the territorial integrity of Manipur, are likely to protest the creating a Kuki land outside Manipur. While there are overlapping of claims on lands for proposed Kuki state and proposed lands for Naga integration; and the opposition of the Meiteis to any fragmentation of the existing territorial boundary, there is yet another demand put up by UPF for the creation of an Autonomous state (state within a state) under the provision of Part x, Article 244A of the Constitution, which provides “Notwithstanding” anything in this Constitution, Parliament may, by law, form within the state of Assam an Autonomous state comprising (whether wholly or in part) all or any of the tribal areas specified in part 1 of the table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule and creation thereof-

- (a) a body, whether elected or partly nominated and partly elected, to function as a Legislature for the autonomous state, or
  - (b) a council of Minister or both with such constitution, powers and functions, in each case, as may be specified in the law.
- (2) Any law as is referred to in clause (1), in particular-
- (a) Specify the matter enumerated in the state list or the concurrent list with respect to which the Legislature of Autonomous State shall have power to make laws for the whole or any part thereof, whether to exclusion of the Legislature of the state of Assam or otherwise;
  - (b) Define the matters with respect to which the executive powers of the autonomous state extend;
  - (c) Provide that any tax levied by the state of Assam shall be assigned to the autonomous state in so far as the proceeds thereof are attributable to the autonomous state;
  - (d) Provided that any reference to a state in any article of their constitution shall be construed as including a reference to autonomous state;
  - (e) Making such supplemental, incidental and consequential provision as may be deemed necessary.
3. An amendment of any such law as aforesaid in so far as such amendment relates to any of the matters specified in sub clause (a) or sub clause (b) shall have no effect unless the clause (2) amend the amendment in passed in each House of the Parliament not by less than 2/3 of the members present and voting.
- (4) Any such law as is referred to in this article shall not be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposed of Article 368 notwithstanding that it contains any provision which amends or has the effect of amending this constitution.

The political demand of UPF for the creation of an autonomous state for the entire hill area of Manipur, by amending the relevant provision of the Constitution appears to be the most viable option in so far as it does not pose a threat to the territorial integrity of Manipur. Moreover, the demand, if materialized into practice, the problem relating to overlapping of territorial between Kukis and Nagas could be avoided as there would be no ethnic based territorial demarcations of the hills areas. However, the creation of such an autonomous state could be seen by the Meiteis as a potential threat to the territorial integrity of the state as quite a number of subjects under state list would be transferred to the autonomous state.

Issues of contention between Meiteis and Tribal  
Language Factor:

Language, in any given society, could be both disintegrating as well as disintegration factor. Also, in any composite cultural society, there is a dominant as well as marginalized

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and lesser cultural and linguistic group. While there always is an attempt by the dominant group to impose and assimilate its culture and language etc on the marginalized and lesser groups, there always is also a will by the lesser groups to preserve their distinct cultural and linguistic identity. In the process of both trying to further their interests, conflict like situation emerged making the society unstable. True is the case with Manipur, a multi-ethnic, a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society. The Meiteis, being the largest community in Manipur, enjoyed preponderant positions in all aspects of social and political life of the state. By virtue of this, they started developing domineering attitude toward the lesser ethnic tribal communities of the state which was much resented to by the later.

The tribal people in Manipur, while not supportive of the demand and eventual inclusion of Meitei language in the Eight Scheduled of the Constitution, were not openly opposing either. However, soon after the language was accorded constitutional recognition along with Nepali and Konkani, the government tried to impose the language on the tribal people by making it as the official language of the state; and making it as a compulsory subject in all educational institutions in the state. Also, as was with the case of other Eight Schedule languages, steps were being taken to make the language compulsory subject in all examinations conducted by UPSC and Staff Selection Commission. Though there was no serious opposition regarding making of Meitei language as an official language along with English, the idea of making the language as the sole official language of the state without English being made co-official language and the idea of making it compulsory in all educational institutions were strongly opposed by the tribal people living in the hill districts. The language issue has become an issue of contention and had further deepened the hill valley divides. The language crisis, however, subsided with revocation of the order for making the language (Meitei) as compulsory subject in educational institutions and in examinations conducted by UPSC at the Centre.

In the meantime, the demand for adoption of indigenous Meitei script by Meitei Erol Eyek Loinasinba Apunba Lup (MEELAL) as compulsory subject in all educational institutions. The MEELAL also demanded replacement Bengoli script with indigenous Meitei Script (Meitei Majek). In a move to popularize the script, the MEELAL asked all offices and shops to display sign boards in Meitei scrip. This move of the MEELAL has been seen by the non-Meitei speaking tribal people as an attempt to impose the script on them. The hill valley divides has been further deepened by the issue of Meitei script and all the Meitei scripts displayed in offices and shops in the hill areas were dismantled or rubbed-off. Contestation on language, particularly the introduction of Meitei Mejek, have been expressed through political protest by students' organizations across different ethnic groups. Nagas and other tribal people in Manipur rejected Meitei majek outright as an instrument of cultural invasion; and student organizations like the All Tribal Students' Union, Manipur (ATSUM), All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) and Kuki Students' Organizations<sup>3</sup>, Manipur. The United Naga Council, the apex body of Manipur Naga articulated their opposition to the move for imposition of Meitei Majek on the tribal communities of the state. Conflict on language has further fractured the sense of a Manipuri identity itself and threatened ethnic relationship having far reaching consequences on the moral and territorial integrity of the state. The struggle has been more intense in the Naga dominated districts; and educational institution were asked to start affiliating with Nagaland Board of School Education. Speaking to about language issue, N Heni, President of Naga Private School Forms, Manipur, said, "the Naga are dejected and isolated in Manipur by the Meiteis. Nagas are today like a body torn apart into pieces and made to work like a dead man without identity as every development in

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Manipur is a cause for some serious threat to every Naga, specially, when it came to education, the text book of Manipur have denied our rights, culture and identity. Now, the time has come for the Naga people to realize this, and we, today take this step in moving hand from Board of Secondary Education, Manipur to Nagaland Board of School Education, to fulfill our aspiration to study text books that respects our history, culture and wisdom". In 2007 all private high schools affiliated under board of secondary education, Manipur located in the Naga dominated districts of Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Senapati and Chandel districts shifted from BOSEM to Nagaland Board of School Education. However, the shifting of affiliation from BOSEM to NBSE was opposed by the Government of Manipur and threatened to derecognize all private schools affiliated to NBSE. With the refusal of Government of Manipur to give "No Objection Certificate" to those willing private schools to affiliate to NBSE, the process of shifting affiliation could not move further. However, language issue has still been a dominant issue in the Meitei tribal relationship. The on ganging process of movement for popularization of Meitei script (Meitei Majek) in the valley has been seen by the tribal people as a step in the direction of imposing the script on them. Therefore language issue could still be seen as contributory factor to the ever deepening of hill-valley divides in Manipur. There were also series of protests in other hill district of Churachandpur by student's organizations.

There were also series of Protestant on language policy of the dominant Meiteis in Churachandpur districts by different tribal communities. They launched a counter-campaign for removal of all sign board displayed in Meitei Majek in the district. The tribal communities of Manipur, in general have seen the language policy of the government and that of MEELAL as linguistic imperialism. They were apprehensive of total absorption of tribal society into a greater Meitei society, thereby leading to the extinction of their culture and ethnic identities. The tribal people, fearing cultural invasion by numerically larger Meitei people are, therefore, bent on preventing the inroad of Meitei Majek into the hills which is seen by the Meiteis as one of the factors responsible for further widening the hill-valley divides.

Another hill-valley conflict of interest has recently surfaced with the demand of Meiteis for Schedule Tribe (ST) status and for declaration of the state as hills state. The demand is based on ethnicity. The Meiteis, being Mongoloid by race, and speaking a branch of Tibeto-Burman language, claim that they should also be recognized as Schedule Tribe. Justifying their demand they maintain that since all Mongoloid racial stocks speaking Tibeto-Burman group of languages are recognized as hill tribe, they, being belonging to the same group, also be given Schedule Tribe status. However, the tribal communities have the genuine apprehension that once Meiteis are given schedule tribe status, all reserved seats for the tribal (ST) in educational institutions and government jobs will go to the Meiteis, who are more developed and more advance educationally, economically and so on, and that the tribal people, being more backward, would be in no position to compete them. This, according to the tribal people, means, loss of reserved seats for ST in educational institutions, government jobs etc. to the Meiteis.

Options for conflict resolution:

As seen in the preceding discussion, conflict resolution in Manipur has become a herculean task with each ethnic group having divergent political aspirations. In the hills surrounding the valley, there are Nagas who had been demanding the integration of their inhabited areas with the adjoining state of Nagaland or the creation of a separate administrative unit, outside Manipur or what they called, Alternative Arrangement (AA) outside Manipur. The Kukis, while rejecting the inclusion of pockets of their inhabited areas in Naga dominated districts, are demanding the creation of a separate Kuki homeland. Again the Zomis, a conglomeration of 8 different recognized tribes, are pursuing their demand for the creation of an autonomous state within Manipur. On the other hand, the majority community, the Meiteis, are all for safe-guarding the territorial integration of Manipur. The Government, both at the Centre and state, are in complete dilemma as there could be no easy solution to the ongoing conflict in Manipur. The nature of conflict requires careful consideration so as to avoid armed confrontation among different ethnic groups having divergent political demands. To the Meiteis, territorial integrity is of paramount importance where as to Nagas Alternative Arrangement which could be interpreted as a separate state or integration of their inhabited districts with Nagaland is of paramount importance. Again, to the Kukis and Zomis, Kuki land/Kuki state and an autonomous state, respectively ultimate objectives. The three main ethnic groups are, therefore, living in a perpetual fear a divesting and mutually destructive open armed conflict.

It is, therefore, important for the state to formulate policies for moral and emotional integration of Manipur. Territorial integration without emotional integration is not likely to last long and, therefore, territorial integration should be preceded by emotion integration. To this end, state has to make an accommodative policy by diversifying developmental infrastructure proportionately. Over concentration of infrastructure for education and economic development in the valley districts is seen by eth hill people as discrimination. It is a fact that almost all important offices, institutions etc. are located in Imphal, the capital city of the state. The Manipur University, the State University which is coming up shortly, two medical colleges RIMS & JN Hospital, etc. are all located in the valley. Regarding the demands of different tribal ethnic groups, the government, while guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the state, could try giving Sixth Schedule provision to the hill areas with special protection of land and land ownership. Also, an autonomous state, a state within a state under Article-244A be considered without disturbing the territorial integration of the state. Tribal people are conscious of their right over land and, therefore, nothing should be done whether by legislation or otherwise, to encroach upon tribal land. The Zomi Council, the apex body of several tribes, has suggested a rather realistic possibility of an ATS (Autonomous State) under Article 224A of the Constitution. A memorandum was submitted by the Zomi Council to the Prime Minister on March 26, 2011. ATS, will be made up of all hill districts in the state with the objective to fulfill the socio-economic, political, linguistic, cultural and development aspirations of the people; to preserve the ethnic identity and traditional practices; to protect their right over land and its resources; and maintain the territorial integrity of the state. The creation of Autonomous State for the entire hill areas of Manipur would, perhaps, be the most viable option for resolution of conflict in Manipur, partly because boundary demarcation of ATS would not be based on ethnicity, and partly because it would give more political power to the tribal people without jeopardizing the territorial integrity of the state.

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