

ASUK expresses apprehension about the emergence of Pan Islamic Movement among the Meitei Pangal

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The series of events at which some of the Meitei Pangal were found involved in the radical movement of the Pan Islamism showed that some among the Meitei Pangal now actively working for the Pan Islamic movement, a statement jointly signed by the Chairman N. Oken and Vice Chairman Ksh Laba said in a statement. The statement further added that the Radical Pan Islamic movement has been given serious effect to the indigenous Meitei Pangal of the state. Elaborating on the issue of identity, the statement said that the ethnic identity of the Meitei Pangal is that On the identity of the Meitei pangal, the statement said that since the arrival of

the Pangal till 1970/1980, the Meitei Pangal consider their ethnic identity as priority. As they follow Islam they called Muslim by themselves but they always consider their ethnic pangal identity as more important. Those days Meitei pangal and Meitei enjoyed good relationship. They have friends from Meitei community and share moment at time of family ceremony or rituals. Dresses during cultural function were very similar between the Meitei and the pangal, names were similar with the Meitei and the Meitei pangal. There was no question of communal riots among the two communities. But today there are much changes seen. The Pangal locality are seen like only for the pangal where no other

community could entered which is similar to 'ghetto'. This was not to provoke the majority Meitei but is a self ghettoization, the statement by ASUK said. These days the Meitei pangal consider their identity as muslim rather than their ethnic identity. The Meitei pangal separated themselves from their ethnic brothers - then Naga, Meitei and the Kuki Chin and consider all Muslim as one. Some of the Meitei pangal now use the word kafir instead of saying that we are one. Kafir in old Muslim language are those following the Islam. However, those Meitei pangal residing at Bangladesh are more ethnic pangal then those staying here. Thus the Islamic politics now is giving serious impact to the Meitei pangal.

THE HILL PEOPLE AND THE MERGER OF MANIPUR

By Prof. Lal Dena

At the time India achieved her independence, Manipur also got back her independence. This was soon followed by realignment of new forces in Manipur. The representatives of Tangkhul Long, Kuki National Assembly, Kabul Association, Khul Union, Mizo Union, Manipur Praia Sabha, Manipur Krishak Sabha, Meitei Marup and Nongpok Apunba Marup had a joint meeting at MDU Hall in November, 1947 and formed a United Front of Manipur under the leadership of Hijam Irabot Singh. The main objectives of the Front were to demand full responsible Government in Manipur and to preserve Manipur's territorial integrity. In the first election which took place in 11 June, 1948, not a single political party

could get an absolute majority. As a result, the independent MLAs both from the valley and the hills together formed the Praja Shanti Sabha and formed a coalition government. The attitude and response of the hill people to the merger issue must therefore be seen in the context of their respective party affiliations. Dhabalo Singh, President of the Praja Shanti Sabha in his letter to the Maharaja on 17 December, 1948 expressed that Manipur was to remain as a state and autonomous unit enjoying responsible government with the Maharaja as the constitutional head and with her sovereignty undisturbed. Again, in another memorandum to the Governor of Assam by N. Ibomacha Singh, claimed that almost cent per cent of the people of the State were quite against integration and merger of Manipur to India. The Sabha felt that the existing arrangement under which the Dominion Government of India had control over defence, communications and external affairs was satisfactory. Later on, the ruling members in its meeting on 25 August, 1949 decided that (a) the existing relations between India and Manipur under the Instrument of Accession be continued; (b) home rule run by local figures under the

democratic constitution of Manipur state be also continued; and (c) the representatives of India, if there would be any in Manipur, be bound by the constitution of Manipur, without any interference in day-to-day internal administration of Manipur. In their desperate attempt to preserve the identity and sovereignty of Manipur, the PSS went to the extent of saying that if merger was imposed, it would cause double loss to India and Manipur and concluded thus, "If the people have been sinned against or wronged, the people themselves have to be watched over in addition to the watch over the enemies of India across the frontiers". In this connection, T.C. Tiangkham, Speaker of the Assembly in his letter to private secretary to the Maharaja also expressed his anxiety that, if at all matters relating to the future of Manipur were to be discussed with the Governor of Assam, it should first be referred to the Assembly for discussion. Tiangkham seemed to be well aware of the Bhagyabati Pratika's editorial on 21 September, 1949 which runs thus "Manipur do not want to be subservient to another nation, history provides ample proof for that. However, Manipuris like to

have friendly relations with other nations. We are a nation faithful to truth. The Manipur State cannot tolerate subjugation by another nation. What we want to have is... nothing more than self-rule in this land, as we had always since the beginning of history under a King". Later on, N. Ibomacha Singh and S.L. Lunneh, were deputed to meet the Central Government of the issue. Among the hill leaders, it was only A. Daiho, a tribal leader of Mao Nago, who reacted more violently against the merger of Manipur to India. Daiho got excited with the prospects of independence. He who advocated complete secession of the hills from Manipur and the formation of the Lushai Hills, Somra Tract; Chin Hills, Naga Hills, etc. into a federated hills in the sphere of future hill administration in 1946, again objected tooth and nail the merger of Manipur to India. He even sent a telegram to the Governor General of India saying that the tribal people of Mao did not approve of accession and declared their independence. As the anti-merger agitation in North Manipur under the leadership of Daiho gained momentum, the Mao Nago blocked the Imphal Dimapur Road and in the process, one young boy was killed in the Police firing.

Eye screening camp concluded at press club

By NJ Thakuria
Guwahati, July 8,

Most of the city based scribes need thorough eye check-ups as they constantly use digital screen for hours in a day. In a day long eye screening camp, organized EYE DOCTORS, a city based eye institute and surgery

centre, at Guwahati Press Club on 7 July 2018 it was observed that half of the participants were in need of thorough check-up and necessary treatments. Senior eye surgeon Dr Bindu Singla Goel conducted the camp, where around 60 journalists participated and went with preliminary

screening of their eyes. The practicing physician was assisted by health workers Afsana Khatun and Robita Roy. Few employees of Cipla and Alcon were also present to support the camp. Till date, the press club healthcare clinic has been supported by Down Town

Hospitals, GNRC Hospitals, Apollo Hospitals, SIMS Hospital, Medanta Hospital, Manipal Hospital, Fortis Hospital, Dispur Hospital, GATE Hospital, Ayursundra Hospital, Swagat Hospital, Excelcare Hospital, Health City Hospital, Narayana Hospitals, Barhakur Clinic, Sun Valley Hospital, Rahman Hospital etc.

Contd. from Page 2

Meitei Women in Collectives: Gender, Roles and Potentials

If a group's social capital produces positive externalities, the radius of trust can be larger than the group itself. Such group norms and behaviour got past through generations. Within an overall patrilineal framework, women were able to develop a power base. This has helped them also to possess a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. The network inculcates a willingness to remain in the group and builds their individual capacities. Social capital was, therefore generated through all these cooperative behaviour manifested at different levels on many occasions.

Women, Conflict and Issues
The Government of India promulgated the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in Manipur. This act is a legacy of colonial administration. Since 1980s, with the rise of armed-conflicts, Manipur witnessed the emergence of *Meira Paibi* (torch bearing women activists). This is a collective response against a draconian law like the AFSPA which allows the armed forces to detain an individual without warrant and shoot on suspicion. The effort has been aimed at protecting individuals from harassments, torture, rapes and killings. Over the years, the Act has become the symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and highhandedness. The Act, which was meant to put an end to armed insurrection, has not served its purpose. From few insurgent groups operating in Manipur when the Act was imposed, now there are more than a dozen insurgent group operating in

this small state. With 408 deaths in the year 2007, Manipur remains the second most conflict ridden State in the Northeast, behind Assam with 437 fatalities. The nude protest staged by women in front of Kangla fort, Imphal in 2004 was the testimony against the atrocities and the blatant misuse of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act by security personnel. It questioned the legitimacy of the security forces, local administration, and the Government of India over their existence and the rule of law in Manipur. The Jeevan Reddy Committee in 2005 recommended the repeal of the Act. There are highly committed and motivated *Meira Paibi* activists maintaining midnight vigils in most *leikai* so that no members of the locality are harmed. Based on day-to-day experience, they have even innovated ways of emergency communication in times of trouble to pass the information to every members of the *leikai*. Whenever an untoward incident occur, the *Meira Paibi* activists would sound an alarm by clanging stones on metal electric power lines/ telephone wire posts. All these activities are voluntary and work on the solidarity norms of a community. Every family in a generally *leikai* has a woman *Meira Paibi* representative. Armed conflict in the region demand political negotiation and resolution. This means capacity building of the individual members of the society, particularly women, is of paramount importance. With the increased rate of violence and death in the state, women come out spontaneously, stage sit-in protests in every *leikai* and condemn acts of brutality.

An estimated amount of Rs 20 to 25 crores are lost every day in the state due to strikes, blockades and shutdowns called by different groups across the state. The basic requirements of human security in local environment and strategic consideration for further development of human growth have been sidelined due to the nature of conflict in Manipur. Besides these, the flooding of cheap consumer goods from bigger national economies and international borders with its unequal market competition has degraded the local economy of handicraft and handloom based industries. No public undertaking industries or any big scale private industry and factory exists in Manipur with the only existence of small-scale handloom based industries. There are 5,48,704 (as on 31st March 2006) unemployed youths in the state. The economic survey report 2007-2008 says that the problem of unemployment continues to be a matter of serious concern to the state economy. Amidst violent socio-political atmosphere, Meitei women have taken refuge in formal or informal organisations based on existent solidarity network. To ease economic hardships, most of the *marups* mentioned above in their current avatar maintain social and economic security - includes reciprocal gift giving, exchange labour patterns, monetary help, neighbouring assistance in birth, marriage, illness, death, and other personal crisis. The *marup* is based on already existing primary relationships like kinship based on neighbourhood residency pattern. *Marup* organised for larger monetary benefits may cover a period of three to four years and the sustainability of

this period are all based on the norms of trust and quantum of membership. *Marup* helps to form a strong self-help group among the individuals. When the institution is based on financial aspect, it is similar to the rotating credit association as explained by Putnam in Making Democracy Work to lay the basis for very strong norms of reciprocity and trust and to forge an especially sturdy template for future cooperation. This solidarity behaviour is dictated by the culture, and that means by "inherited ethic habits and reciprocal moral obligations". For this reason, behaviour and choices are not rational because they are a consequence of norms that they have not freely chosen. In fact, community members passively internalise these "cultural capital". **Towards Empowerment and Decision Making**
With the rise in female literacy rate from mere 0.04 in 1901 to 47.60 in 1991, there are many new women's groups who have taken multiplicity of roles in Meitei society. Many of these groups have modern organizational structure and work beyond the confines of *leikai* or kinship. They are not governed by traditional norms of collectivity but are bounded by the rules of the organization. However, their cultural values for solidarity and commitments are at the same level with that of the other traditional and informal groups. There are various formal self-help groups across the state. The most noteworthy of all these organizations is the *Macha Leima* founded in 1969. *Macha Leima*, roughly translated as "precious daughters" have taken many roles in highlighting not only women's issues but also the

overall socio-political context under which issues they function. The organisation has successfully run schools and had also launched micro-credit finance system in the state. In recent times, *Macha Leima* has taken up the initiative to spread awareness of the benefits of the "Right to Information Act, 2005" among the women of Manipur. The law was enacted by the Parliament of India to give the people access to records of Central and State governments in India. Activities of such groups like the *Macha Leima*, while banking on the values of solidarity, have infused the rigour of formal structures in order to incorporate modern education and governance concepts. This has helped the organisation grow effectively and also walk the easy rope between tradition and modernity. Here, it is pertinent to note that the concepts and principles behind *Macha Leima* precede the new global NGOization process. The effective growth of organisations like the *Macha Leima* is possible because of its core foundation - the community. The significance of community driven development is that it allows the active participation of defined communities in at least some aspect of the project design and implementation. While participation occurs at any level, the importance is the incorporation of local knowledge into the project decision-making process. This gives 'voice', 'control' and 'choice' under certain conditions to the people. In Manipur too, the existence of community based organisations with a stock of social capital, have gained their 'voice' and are making their choice. Despite a highly

politically charged and volatile environment, Manipur still has many community-based women's organizations. The tremendous potentials of the Meitei women have been demonstrated in the ways how they have reacted to given situations arising out of socio-political issues. Because of their peculiar positions, these potentials have been distinctively displayed at the public realm confining themselves just to the "power to resist" and also to some extent control. The tremendous empowering potentials exist within the bigger unquestioned patriarchal structure. When it comes to political decision making, the women rarely figure in the picture. Having taken cognizance of the existence and the vast potentials that the Meitei women have, there are some issues that needs to be highlighted. Does the acquisition of a vast social capital by Meitei women necessarily translate into at the least the idea of empowerment? By empowerment here, I am referring to multi-pronged social processes by the women themselves that helps them gain control over their own lives. This process entails not only the acquisition of social capital but also the power for its effective use in a democratic order that balances gender inequality. The process of acquiring immense capital implies the power or the capacity to decide and implement for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society. For this, the women should have the power to decide and define what is important to them within or beyond the patriarchal social set up they belong to. The

power to preserve solidarity and the power to resist as shown by the women in the history of Manipur have not translated into the power to decide in the body-politics of the Meitei society beginning from the domestic to the public realm. The durability of the informal solidarity based networks may experience ruptures and disjuncture due to the impact of the new global order. It is here that there is a need to rethink on how do the Meitei women sustain the collective solidarity that binds them without the traditional forms of "socializing" the girl child. Modern education system as a tool for empowerment does not follow the traditional pattern of socialization and therefore has a definitive impact on how young girls grow up into women. There is a need for a creative fusion between tradition and modernity to make not only the social capital of Meitei women circulate but also have some purchasing power to decide. This fusion can be further enhanced by capturing the potentials of being able to stand collectively on ethical or moral grounds. It may be recalled that within the patriarchal Meitei society, women's collective voice always had a social sanction despite rigid social mores. And the auto-mechanism that has existed so far has not brought any damage or hindrance to the forms of solidarity as social capital. The solidarity based on informal relationship supported by traditional institutions has always backed the Meitei women. It is time they also take part in formal decision-making process and governance through both a declarative and deliberative policy by the government and the society at large.