

# Editorial

Tuesday, September 18, 2018

## Social lacunae

In our trouble prone state of Manipur, the people had often witnessed punishments and harassments meted out to innocent family members for a crime committed by a single member of that family. The state had witnessed houses being burnt, vandalized and whole families ostracized for crimes committed by their family members or near and dear ones. It is still considered a form of sanctioned social justice by a group of dim-witted mob led and provoked by few criminal minded sadistic individuals. And the most recent, is the lynching of a youth who was alleged of lifting a vehicle at Tharojiam area.

The immediate question arises out of the mob violence is the sense of justice, that how far is the act justifiable? Who are the criminals and who are the victims? Who justifies it? The mob itself is a very temporary irrational type of gathering, without any proper coordination and understanding. The logic of means and ends of an action cannot be justified by swarming up in few moments. An action in order to be justifiable needed a proper coordination of the means and the ends to be employed before steps are taken up.

For sometimes the people of the state were somewhat relieved with the Chief Minister of Manipur N. Biren Singh taking the matter seriously. Action taken report was heard for someday and the with some hopes. But disturbingly, now the trend is getting even worse. People now started blaming an entire community for a crime committed by an individual belonging to that particular community. If a person is found killed or manhandled in an area of a specific community the whole community is blamed and harassed.

Three instances still haunt the state. The death of two youths at Mayang Imphal area in 2016 in mob action nearly shattered the harmony of the small valley region. Thanks to the civil society organisations, notably the Anjuman volunteers and the police department for handling the issue with extra care and diffusing the communal tension in time. The same year, the death of another 27 year old youth who was found hanging at Lilong area had once more shattered the fragile communal harmony and understanding. The whole community of the area is being blamed for the death. As of now the absolute truth is yet to be ascertained but speculations doing the round have now provoked communal tension between the two communities. On the other hand the death of another youth at Kasom Khullen area has created similar kind of situation. He was found murdered in an area where a specific community resides and therefore, going by the social trend, people belonging to the community of the murdered youth now felt that their community should be blamed.

Now, the case of Farooque had reminded that inhuman and uncultured practice in our state once more. But this time attempt to make it communal by some vested interested had failed. With the rise of more people who stood against any mob violence, everyone irrespective of which community the victim belong to condemn the drastic inhuman action. May be the person might have committed some crime but who are the villagers who assaulted inhumanly to him. Are they authorize to take the law in their own hand.

Point worth remembering is a quote from the writing of late Seram Mangi, former news editor of AIR Imphal. As shared through a post by his son Seram Neken on a social network site, the former editor had rightly questioned as to why a community should be blamed and crushed for a crime committed by a single individual belonging to the community. He also stated that if that is justice, then God would have killed all human beings for a wrong committed by a single human being.

It is a fact that India is a nation of multi ethnic communities so as Manipur, the erstwhile nation of South East Asia, now a state of India inhabited by over 33 distinct communities. For reasons best known to the government authorities some vital connection crucial for binding the people of every community as a cohesive single unit is sorely missing- a potent reason the people started taking due importance of their near and dear ones instead of considering themselves as the citizen of the same state or country.

Unlike India, United States of America which is home to many diverse communities from around the world such as a French, an African or an Indian etc. think that they are American first before coming to the community that they belong to. It is said that the constitution is what binds the people as Americans above everything. Communal enmity was an undeniable blot in the history for this country. Unfortunately, we the citizens of India are committing today the same blunder that happened 100 years ago in places like America.

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# Manipuri Diaspora in Myanmar: Past and Present 1

## Early History

It was during the Bagan period in the Eleventh Century that the Manipuris started settling in Myanmar, the wife of king Kyan Sit Thar happened to be a Manipuri princess. The present-day polo or 'goolie game' which has its origin in Manipur was played during the time of king Bayiunaung (1551-81) who belonged to the Taungoo period (Manipuris called it as Tongdoy). Many Kate horsemen served under this king. In the year, 1558, the king of Manipur, Meidingngu Chalamba offered his daughter to king Bayiunaung to forge an alliance. Many members of the Manipuri royalty settled in Taungoo. Before and after 1648, war continued between the two neighbours - Manipur and Myanmar. In the year 1702, The Tongoo Dynasty of Awa (Present day Myanmar) sent emissaries asking for the hand of Meitei princess. King Charairongba of Manipur gave his daughter, Chakpa Makhaongambi, to the then Awa king. In the year 1738, the Manipuri king, Jayashree Garibaniwaj offered his daughter, Hmin Long Khang, to king Sa-ne in 1732. She had the privilege of enjoying taxes from Popa Town as a Popa Myoza. In the year 1738, Jaishree Garibaniwaj Maharaja marked the eastern door of the Kaungmadaw Pagoda, situated at Sagaing, with his sword. In 1735 Maharaja Garibaniwaj of Manipur collected cows and slaves from Myedu of Shwebo district after attacking it. He destroyed some villages and pagodas sending cavalry to the upper part of Myanmar. The Manipuri soldiers defeated Myanmarese soldiers. Again in 1738, he was camping near Sagaing. According to the order of Maharaja Garibaniwaj, Kaunghmudaw Pagoda built by king Thalun of Myanmar was taken care of. The Maharaja entered the pagoda and put a sword mark on the eastern door of the pagoda.

In the year 1749, during the reign of king Maha Dhammarajadipati, the Manipuri king [Jayashree Jitashaha, or Chitsai] gave his daughter to him. There she was conferred the title of Maha Devi. She, along with Princess Popa and her husband, the deposed king, was exiled to Hanthawaddy (Bago) when the Mons occupied Inwa. Interestingly she was installed as a queen by the Mon king and the title, Thirizeya Mingala Devi, was given. In the year, 1757, King

Manipur to Mogok for working in ruby mines. And again in 1812, this king brought more Manipuris and let them settle there. In the year 1769, a Sino- Myanmar War took place during the time of king Myeidumin. A combined force of Kate horsemen, numbering around 500 and Myanmarese army, launched an attack against the Chinese. In 1780 king Bodawpaya brought some Manipuris from Manipur to Mogok for working in ruby mines. And again in 1812, this king brought more Manipuris and let them settle there. During the reign of Marjit Maharaja (1813-1819), king Bagyi daw of Myanmar invaded Manipur and the Seven Years Devastation took place in Manipur during 1819-1826. During the Seven Years Devastation, king Bagyi daw brought some Manipuris to Myanmar by promising job opportunities. Under two instances, each numbering 30,000 of Manipuris were taken to Myanmar in the year 1820 and 1821. Gambhir Singh Maharaja of Manipur built up Manipur Levy with the help of the British and expelled the invaders from Manipur. Manipuris settled in Myanmar at different places according to the suitability of their vocation. Those settlers were - skilled weavers, carpenters, painters, goldsmiths, rowers, soldiers, cavalry, indigenous physicians, priests and astrologers etc. The existing Myanmar Manipuris who had settled there since early times participated in many happy and sorrow moments of Myanmar as Myanmar is their motherland in their hearts. Myanmarese Manipuri women brought fame to their adopted country and also helped it economically. Untouchability, caste system, social ostracism and assimilation to other communities have contributed to the slow extinction of the Manipuri community in Myanmar.

Bhamo etc. of Kachin state. Different places of Mandalay division remain populated by Manipuris. Manipuris at present are settled around of Mandalay

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(Mandalay was the capital between 1857 - 1885). Just to the eastern side of the site is Nandawsae.

The word Nandawsae in Myanmarese does mean that it is on the eastern part of the original capital. Just to the western side of it is Minde-e-kin village. Those Manipuris settled at Myintur are the descendants of Manipuri cavalries that settled in this locality. The word 'Myin' is for horse and 'Tut' is for army in the Myanmarese language. Around 15 km from Myintur is the village of Ahenitaw. The word 'Ahenitaw' stands for a village inhabited by very skilled medical practitioners. Most of them are the descendants of those Manipuris who were forcibly taken to Myanmar to serve as medicine men. Just to the south-western side of the past capital arc villages - Kha-Kshetri, Awang Kshetri, Bamon Khunjao (Paonasu), Kshetri Khul, Ninglhem Purohit Khul (those inhabitants were serving Myanmarese kings as purohits), Lairkyengbam Leikai and Myint Mo Geve etc.

There is Dal Dale and Lathamar villages (the latter is known as Konjengbam Leikai) just near Amarapura (it was the capital of Myanmar from 1783 to 1823) of Mandalay division. A little distance away from Amarapura is Shrigram or Senga Manipuri village and also Gaave (Myanmarese know it as Yekyi pauk) village. Before reaching Sagaing, there is a Manipuri village known as Shweketye by the Mandalay road.

There is another Manipuri village called 'Hypi-kathe' (supplementary residents) in Mogok which is situated to the northern side of Mandalay. In 1780 king Bodawpaya settled Manipuris at Mogok to use them for ruby mining. And again in 1812 the king added another 45 families, and had to settle them there. There are more of Kate (Manipuri) villages near Kyatpyen due to an increase in their population.

In 1916, one written silver scroll was found near an old pagoda in Kathe (Manipuri town). In that scroll it was written that in 1785 the right of ruby mining was in the hands of so - Thungyi of Kathe, Mogok. The Kathe town is adjacent to Kyatpyen. In 1783, during Bodawpaya's time, Manipuri captives were used in the ruby mine. The place was known as Myaukywar by villagers during those days. They have identified themselves and the villages as Kathe for a long historical period. Lots of beautiful folk tales and man-made stories for those Kaths and Kyatpyen, settled around Mogok, were written in the parabaiks of Myanmar from an early time.

Date Dale, a Manipuri village, was at Nan Sayet (next to the palace on the eastern side) and it shifted near Amarapura after the British conquered Myanmar. There were around eight villages at Amarapura and Zecho is one of them. The word 'zecho' means 'cheap market' in Myanmarese language. Lots of silk clothes woven by Manipuris were available at this market. But, now-a-

days, no sign of this market is left. Manipuris have settled at Yangon division also. The localities inside it arc - Ma-oo-Gone, Yae-mya, Kama Yut, Mandalay street Pannazo and Pogodong etc. There were not less than four villages in Sagaing division (it was the capital of Sagaing division during 1315-1364) and the remaining villages are Moza (Bamon Leikai) and Kate zu etc. Besides, Manipuris settled at Swebo and Katha villages of Sagaing division.

Manipuri settlements are also found along the Ningshi river, and the areas sandwiched between the river and the boundary of Manipur. The villages are - Homalin on the northern side, Kenta, Tekshikhong, Sayachan, Tanal, Miyudik, Maksha. Kondong, Kanjiwa (Tamun), Nanfalong, Nantank, Samjok, Tayong, Molai, Aungchantha (inside Kaliwa) and Natchang (inside Kalemyo) etc. The appearance of the Manipuris or Kates who have settled on along river bank of the Ningshi (Chindwin) river have changed a lot after the Second World War.

Some of them abandoned their original villages and settled around Moreh. Till 1968 there were around fifteen Manipuri households in Kanjiwa which is situated inside Tamu. But, now, no sign of the village is there. There is a Manipuri village named 'Katejwa' near the Inle Lake of Shan state. The word Juwa means village or villages in Myanmarese language. There are Manipuri villages at Basin and Hinthada of Ayayarwaddy division.

There is a tradition of using two names among Myanmarese Manipuri-Kates and Kate-Paonas. The first name is given by the family themselves and the second name is of the Myanmarese language. The Manipuri name is used in the family and among Manipuri circles. In order to get opportunities in education and service, there is a compulsory tradition of adopting a name in the Myanmarese language. There is no surname in a Myanmarese name. 'U' is prefixed before name of a male Manipuri elder while 'Daw' is prefixed before a middle-aged woman's name. Myanmarese Manipuri girls prefix their names with 'Ma'. Those Manipuri-Kates and Kate-Paonas settled around Mandalay, Amarapura and Sagaing know their surname and gotras. Some of the Manipuri-Kates settled along the river banks of the Ningshi (Chindwin) river know their surnames and yek-salai (clan).

The custom of division among Myanmarese Manipuris into Brahmins, Kshetris and Sudras was prevalent strongly among the Manipuri society. Untouchability and discrimination based on religion still exists. Since the formation of a Manipuri society about 250 years ago, untouchability and discrimination have become causes for shrinking the original population of the Manipuris.

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Alaungpaya took some Manipuris as captives and along with some others settled them at Sagaing and various parts of Amarapura district. He established a Kate cavalry with the number ranging around 2000. Siam (Thailand) was invaded by king Alaungpaya along with a Kate cavalry that had 500 horsemen.

Again in December 1764 Myedu (Hsinbyshim) of Myanmar invaded Manipur and took some Manipuris to Ava (it was the capital city between 1364-1555 and 1629-1752) as captives and settled them around the outskirts of the city. King Alungpaya developed a cavalry battalion out of Manipuri settlers. Then, king Alungpaya invaded Siam (Thailand) with the help of 500 Manipuri cavalries. In 1780 king Bodawpaya brought some Manipuris from

non-availability of the intonation 'r' in Myanmarese vocabulary since earliest times, 'Ponna' was used for 'Purna'. But it is pronounced as 'Paona' instead of Ponna'. The Manipuri Brahmins served as the priests and counsellors at the royal court and also practised the art of astrology.

**Places settled by Manipuris**  
 Manipuris remain scattered in and around different parts of Myanmar, such as - Kachin state, Yangong division, Sagaing division, Shan state, Ayeyarwaddy division etc. Some of the old villages have vanished. Even the names of the settled areas remain forgotten by the new generations. Some of the existing Manipuri villages have been absorbed into Myanmarese society. Manipuris have settled at Myitkyina,