

**RELIGION, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE STATE:
PANGALS IN MANIPUR**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

FEROJA SYED



**Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067
2007**



Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India

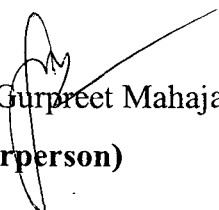
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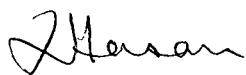
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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Religion, Ethnic Identity and the State: Pangals in Manipur**” submitted by **Feroja Syed** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is an original work of her own. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan
(Chairperson)

Chairperson
Centre for Political Studies,
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067


Prof. Zoya Hasan
(Supervisor)

SUPREY K. G.
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Dedicated
to
Baba, Ema and Mamu

Acknowledgement

I sincerely would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Zoya Hasan for giving me enough freedom while writing this dissertation but without her timely suggestions and kind helps, the present work would not have seen its day.

I am grateful to the faculty of Centre for Political Studies for their teachings and guidance. My thanks also go to staff of various libraries particularly Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi; Special Assistance Programme, Centre for Political Studies, JNU; Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti; Delhi University Library, Delhi; Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi and Omeo Kumar Institute of Social Change & Development, Guwahati for their kind help and cooperation.

I owe my special thanks to my father and my brother for providing me with the materials as per my requirements and advice throughout my research work. I would also like to thank my friends especially Ripamchi, Barasa, Jubilee, Tabitha, Jana, Pemu, Tashi, Yanki, Che Gita and Getali whose support, by way of physical help and prayers, have contributed much to this research work.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my mother and my four sisters for their continuous support and prayers.

Most importantly, I thank Almighty God for his blessings.

*Feroja Syed
July, 2007*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMMOCOC	All Manipur Muslim's Organization Coordinating Committee
AMMSO	All Manipur Muslim Student Organization
AMPWA	All Manipur Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) Welfare Association
IKL	Ireipak Kanba Lup
KCP	Kangleipak Communist Party
KKL	Kangleipak Kanba Lup
KMCDO	Kangleipak Muslim Chanura Development
KNA	Kuki National Army
KNF	Kuki National Front
KNO	Kuki National Organization
MCS	Manipur Civil Service
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MMMDC	Manipur Minority Muslim Development Committee
MOBC	Minority and Other Backward Classes
MPS	Manipur Police Service
MYDO	Minority Youths' Development Organisation
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PLA	People's Liberation Party
PRA	People's Republican Army
PREPAK	Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

PSU	Public Sector Undertaking
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UCM	United Council Manipur
UMO	United Muslim Organisation
ZNC	Zomi National Congress

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of new nation-states and growing awareness among different communities about their separate distinct identities and exploitation of their rights there is rise of ethnicity leading to the consolidation of each ethnic group. Ethnic identities have become an important instrument to enhance developmental gains and prospects of advancement of particular communities. The identity assertions of various ethnic groups have been articulated through religion, language, culture, caste, region and race. Some movements launched by dominant ethnic groups are well known but many smaller ones with blurred cultural markers are also now beginning to assert their identities.¹ They start their assertion with non-political issues such as the development of their language, culture but the unsolved economic apprehensions gave it a political direction in the subsequent period and so started pleading for adequate share of power in order to maintain their respective identities. The urges of different ethnic groups of northeast India for maintaining their distinct identities have been a phenomenon in itself. The movements of the various communities to assert and protect their, what is commonly called 'ethnic' identity, are the most significant aspects of the contemporary socio-political reality of northeast.²

The spatial distribution indicates that Muslims are a phenomenon in themselves in several parts of India and there are hundreds of other places in which Muslims are not so visible. In fact they have been living for ages in the midst of other communities as an inseparable part and bound together by age-old ties tradition, culture, social practice and economic interdependence. A general perception prevalent is that northeast region hosts only hill tribes, though multitude other communities inhabit it. In spite of large concentration and a history of some 800 years, the theme of religion and culture of northeast India ignore the Muslims and remain understudied. With the impression that the Muslims have a recent history in the region and are mostly immigrants from Bangladesh,

¹ Apurba Baruah, "Conflicts and Communities: A Northeast Indian Perspective," in Girin Phukon (ed.) *Inter-Ethnic Conflict in North-East India* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2005) p.27

² *Ibid.*

therefore, so far, studies are concentrated on Assam and Tripura. Therefore, the need is to undertake a more comprehensive, adequately differentiated and in depth micro-level studies of the Muslims in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society like Manipur.

In this light, we can study the case of the Manipuri Muslims also known as 'Pangal' community in Manipur. The rise of ethnic consciousness among the Manipuri Muslims is a combination of ethnic and religious identity in Manipur. The postulate is that the rise of ethnic consciousness among other communities and tribes inhabiting the state and the force of Islamization has led to the creation of new consciousness to assert a wider identity among the Manipuri Muslims. In the past, they were not identified as a separate ethnic group because of the lack of distinct culture and did not attach subjective importance to their distinctiveness. With the heightening of ethno-nationalist assertions, the consolidation of collective identities began to be directed towards the other and ethnic and religious strife of various shades and colours became prominent in Manipur. These ethnic consciousnesses, which are very recent, have not only brought new equations of power, but also added newer dimension to the concept of the 'other'.³ In the case of Pangals, the rise of identity consciousness and identity formation are mainly due to the dominant group such as the Meitei's role towards assimilation, growing economic competition among different ethnic groups and political and developmental processes enforced by the state. As a consequence of the rise of various identity movements and its related conflicts in the state, this group has developed a new consciousness that reflects a wider identity among them. In the context of intensification of competing claims and conflicts, we can see another dimension at work. The Manipuri Muslims has also transformed into a community, self-consciously holding on to their religious affiliation to Islam asserting their religious identity in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state of Manipur.

While the role of the state as an arbiter of the conflict seems to come up quite naturally, the state's responsibility as a rational and just arbiter require additional

³ See Bhagat Oinam and Homen Thangjam, Indian "Nation State" and Crisis of the "Periphery," in Prasenjit Biswas and C. Joshua Thomas (eds.) *Peace in India's Northeast- Meaning, Metaphor and Method: Essays of Concern and Commitment* (New Delhi Regency Pub, 2006) pp. 49-78.

qualifications. In a conflict ridden state of Manipur the state's 'power politics' is often influenced by the dominant and powerful groups and has failed to adequately respond to the demands of various groups. In this context, we can look at the role of the state by focusing on two major issues; firstly, the communal riots of 1993 between the Pangals and the Meiteis, and secondly, on the demands for reservation by the Manipuri Muslims in the aftermath of the riots. This will bring to light the attitude and response of the state towards the demands and grievances for adequate representation of minority groups such as the Pangals. Such manifestation of demands and protests against majoritarian politics is a further reflection of their identity assertions in the state.

This study examines in particular the identity formation of the Muslim community in Manipur. Some of the main questions examined are: How is Muslim identity distinct from 'Pangal' identity? If not, can such nomenclatures be used interchangeably? How they were able to maintain their own identity at the same time be integrated into the multi-ethnic state like Manipur? Are the ongoing separate identity movements in Manipur and its related ethnic conflicts the main cause for the formation of Muslim identity in the state? Is Islamization leading to the formation of Muslim identity in Manipur or is it the other way round? What are the impacts of the communal riot of 1993 and whether the demands for reservation of Muslims are due to the outbreak of the riot? These and many other allied questions are sought to be answered in this study. This work is a broad attempt to study the trajectory of the emergence as well as the development of identity consciousness among the Manipuri Muslims.

It is necessary to examine in this treatise the historical background and syncretistic life of the Pangals in Manipur from a recent past to more current developments. It is mainly due to the assumption that the contemporary character of identity can only be understood by linking it to its evolution in the past to see the genesis of the Muslim Identity and Islamization process which became relevant while explaining the birth of Muslim Identity within the multi-ethnic context of Manipur. The probe into the post-riot period is the need to recognize the Muslim Identity in Manipur and reservation issue may be understood in terms of relative deprivation theory.

Methodology

Except a few indigenous archaic literatures known as Puyas (like Nongsamei, Pangal Thorakpa and Cheitharol Kumbaba) and some historical works, there is no serious and systematic study on the Muslims of Manipur. There is absence of adequate and well-researched study on the divergent aspects of the Muslims of Manipur like their social and cultural issues; their bargaining capacity in respect of allocation or sharing power; their political position and strategy for survival as a minority community in a conflict-ridden state.

Because of the paucity of secondary sources on the basis of which M.Phil work is usually carried out, it is difficult to make any accurate and proper analysis and come to conclusion. Still then, an attempt is made to draw broad inferences and generalizations based on personal observations and understanding of the issues and problems confronting the Muslims of Manipur. As limited works are available concerning Muslims, almost all kinds of sources are used for the research. Royal chronicles, indigenous archaic literature and Puyas are the main sources available for the understanding of the nature of the society, religion and polity of the Manipur. Besides, there are many British Accounts and modern writings also along with State Government's documents and reports.

Manipuri Muslims form an important part of the Manipuri society and so a study of various aspects of this community is necessary for the understanding of the present Manipuri society in general and Manipuri Muslims society in particular. This study is limited to the three main valley districts of Manipur because Muslims are concentrated here. The valley areas of Manipur are predominantly inhabited by the Meiteis with Manipuri Muslims as the second largest group in the valley. Also Manipuri Muslims had adopted many of the cultural aspects of the neighbouring major community that is the Meiteis and Manipuri as the mother tongue of the Manipuri Muslims. Because of these two factors, Muslims relation with the Meiteis is the main focus and area of attention of this research work. The role of the state is examined in the third chapter, but this is done mainly after Manipur got statehood.

Organisation of the Study

A scheme of three-fold chapterization has been followed in this study. The first chapter provides an account of the historical background of the coming of Pangals to Manipur, their gaining a foothold in the state and spreading outside Manipur in the first part. In the second part, syncretistic socio-cultural life of the Manipuri Muslims with the adoption of cultural elements in the social organizations like the clan system, in social customs like marriage and in charms and magic are discussed. The study examines some important debates regarding the use of the terms like 'Pangal', 'Meitei-Pangal' and 'Muslim'. Also such terms have created a lot of unnecessary misunderstanding in the state and confusion outside. A particular emphasis is also given to the religious consciousness among the Muslims in Manipur and why Meitei elements were not found creeping in the field of religion.

The second chapter discusses the formation of the distinct Muslim identity in Manipur with special focus on the factors responsible for the emergence of Muslim identity and its nature. Firstly, this study examined the formation and manifestation of distinct ethnic identities in Manipur in general and Meitei identity in particular. Nagas have emotional attachment and admiration for Nagaland, the southern tribes and Chin-Kukis are drawn towards and look upon Mizoram for a common identity. And Meiteis with its revival movement that is Sanamahi Movement is searching for Meitei identity. In this light it is necessary here to look at the consequences of such ethnic conflicts for minority communities like Manipuri Muslims and their role in the conflict which along with other factors (like political, economical and ideological) has changed. Islamization is another main factor which is discussed at length in the chapter. Trying to answer to the question as to why Muslims sought to differentiate themselves ethnically through the process of Islamization, this study puts forward three important points that is whether dominant religion's tolerance and lack of discrimination allows Muslims through Islamization, the freedom of a religious identity or Islamization is a reaction to dominant

religion's hostility and thirdly, whether the process provides political or economic advantages to Muslims.

The third chapter examines the role of the state in relation to the Muslim community. Fully engrossed in containing the insurgency and challenges from the secessionist elements and mounting ethnic conflicts in Manipur, attempt is to show the neglecting and undermining the problems faced by the marginalized community like Manipuri Muslims. Communal riots of 1993 and demands for reservation of the Muslims are the two main issues examined in this dissertation. The use of the term 'Meitei-Pangal' which was in a dormant form earlier was revived by the Meiteis to argue that Muslims are part of the Meitei community. This position was given a stronger emphasis after the anti-Pangal violence which occurred in 1993 in order to encourage their assimilation in the larger Meitei community. Muslims developed a fear psychosis of being subjugated by the majority communities leading to the growth and sharpening of Muslim identity. The consequence of these processes saw the emergence of Manipuri Muslims as a distinct political community which led to a chain of governmental and non-governmental organizations in Manipur putting pressure on the state in regard to the grievances and demands of the community. These pressures and counter pressures on identity formation form the main concern of this study.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL FORMATION OF THE PANGALS

Muslims throughout the Islamic world accept the Shari'a to be the guiding principle of their religious and social life and seek to abide by it. It is therefore, there is a widespread impression or assumption that all the different parts of the Muslim world if not universally, is a single and monolithic followers who strictly adhere to the basic tenets of Islam as embodied in the Shari'a. Modern researches have shown that Islam has always reflected a greater degree of pluralism and diversity unlike Islam as a homogeneous mass of a religious and cultural uniformity as upheld by almost all the medieval Islamic writers. Islam has been and is in the contemporary period far more religiously plural than popular conceptions of Islam widely assumed. It is more appropriate to speak of Moroccan Islam, Indonesian Islam, Arab Islam or Indian Islam rather than of Islam in the singular.¹ Thus Islam is not only an ideology, but it is also a cultural system.² This cultural system has two sets of representations. First set is those cultural values that are rooted in certain Islamic beliefs and concepts which are universal and constant across regions or territories. For instance, Muslims throughout the world share the five cardinal pillars of faith. Secondly, there are those cultural values which are essentially social in character and are accretions from the regional culture, in which a particular Muslim group exists. And this culture differs from region to region. These cultural accretions are usually manifested through dress, food, language, literature, life-cycle rituals, social structure, idea of fatalism, beliefs in the supernatural, etc. Such cultural values developed as a response to diverse cultural situations to which Islam had to adapt and adjust as it made its course from the West Asian heartland to the diverse parts of the world.

¹ See Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983) pp. xxxv-xxxv

² See Anwar Moazzam, "Islam/ Muslim Culture: A Study of Relationship between Uniformity and Variety," *Islamic culture*, Jan 1979; Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1981) p.15

According to Imtiaz Ahmed:

Unlike Hinduism in India or Islam in Arabia, Islam in India was intrusive in character. It came over an already established civilization and could establish itself only gradually and by slow degrees over the already deeply entrenched indigenous traditions. Already in the course of its journey through Persia and Turkestan, the Islamic faith had acquired certain accretions so that the version of Islam which had been introduced into India was quite different from what it had been in its original heartland. On arrival in India, it had been further diluted through conversion to its fold of large groups of local converts who were bound to bring their pre-conversion beliefs and practices into the faith.³

He further points out:

....the intruding Islamic tradition would probably have liked to conquer the indigenous religious traditions wholesale. However, this could not be possible for Islam to achieve because the indigenous mores and traditions were already an integral part of the life of the people and their total displacement could be achieved only at the cost of Islam's own rejection. It seems plausible that the resistance and resilience shown by the indigenous traditions encouraged Islam in India to accept and retain the local cultural traditions but adapt them to its own requirements and needs by putting an Islamic content into them.⁴

S.C.Misra distinguished two processes that had been operating throughout the Medieval period, and he called them indigenization and Islamization. Former denotes a process of generations which in course of time led to the adaptation of the mores by the immigrants or community of the land where they came to settle.⁵ He argues that, the Indian environment has exercised an influence over the Muslim communities in India which has led to the emergence of a "Little Culture" and this development, particularly in its social and cultural forms, has made the Indian Muslim communities a distinct entity.⁶ Thus, the Islamic traditions and the indigenous custom-oriented traditions intermingled to the extent of becoming complementary and integral part of a single and common religious system. Such ritual practices and beliefs remain hard to be ignored, in spite of the ulemas and reformers condemning it.

³ Imtiaz Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.15

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Quoted in *Ibid*, p.12

⁶ S.C.Misra, *Indigenisation and Islamization in Indian History*, Paper presented at the ICSSR colloquium at Hyderabad, November 5-8, 1973

The socio-cultural life of the Muslims in different parts of India, despite differences has co-existence and interaction of the Islamic culture with local cultures especially Hindus. This is partly due to the influence of the majority community on the social life of the minority Muslims and partly due to the mass conversion of Hindus to Islam at different interval of time. Converts brought into Islam many Hindu elements as they could not completely wean themselves away from the organizational framework of the Hindu society. The Muslims of northeast India are no exception, and so the social history of the Muslims in the region presents a case of the regional formulation of Islam.⁷ There are mutual adjustments at various levels of Islamic traditions with the local environment.

Much of these local elements cannot be seen in the social organization, life-cycle rituals, festivals, beliefs and behavioural patterns, which could be described as practical religion (includes supernatural theories of disease causation, e.g. phenomena such as spirit possession, evil eye, and their remedial measures etc.) not to mention the local influence in the realm of food, dress, habits, language, etc. Much of these practices can be seen even today among the Muslims of northeast India.

To this, Sahabuddin Talish wrote:

As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoner in former times and had chosen to marry (here), their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and had nothing of Islam except the name: their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese than association with Muslims.⁸

The same phenomena happened in Manipur among the Muslims who, in course of time adopted many elements of the Meiteis as their own.

⁷ See Syed Ahmed, *Regional Formulation of Islam in Manipur*, Seminar paper on Globalization and the Changing Scenario of Cultural Integration: Manipur Experience (Unpublished) organized by Centre for Manipur studies, Manipur University, Imphal, March 3-4, 2005

⁸ Quoted in Girin Phukon and N.L.Dutta (eds.) *Politics of Identity and Nation-Building in North-East India* (New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1997) p.144.

Settlement of Pangals in Manipur

'Pangal' is a corrupted word of 'Bengal,' though some writers argue that it is derived from 'Mangal,' (the corrupted form of the word 'Mughal') which is quite unlikely. A general perception prevalent is that the Muslims in the northeast region have a recent history and are mostly illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Contrary to this, Pangals (Manipuri Muslims) are the third largest religious community in the state, without any illegal immigrants from Bangladesh adding to its population like Assam and Tripura, and have a history of some 400 years of living in the state. They had settled in Manipur even earlier than many other communities.

The history of the coming of the Pangals and their social organization are recorded in some indigenous archaic literatures of Manipur called Puyas.⁹ Nongsamei is believed to have written by one Leirikyengbam Nongsamei, a soldier who participated in the conflict between the Maharaj Khagemba and joint force of Cachari and Muslim of 1606 A.D. The Puya was co-edited by M.A. Janab and O. Bhogeswar Singh and published in 1973. The other Puya called Pangal Thorakpa was edited by R.K. Sanahal Singh and published in 1985. These two are the main Puyas, which deals with the history of the Pangals. Nongsamei covers the reigns starting from Maharaj Khagemba to Maharaj Bhagyachandra, Pangal Thorakpa also covers the same period. Both the Puyas deal extensively with the coming of these early Muslims, who were made captives by Maharaj Khagemba and their subsequent settlement in the valley of Manipur. It also gives an account of the immigration of the Muslims in batches. The other Chronicle (kumbaba) which gives some reference of the Muslims is Cheitharol Kumbaba. It was first translated and edited by Pandit Thongam Madhob Singh, but later it was edited by L.M. Ibooghal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh in 1967. Except for the reference of the Muslim captives, captured by Maharaj Khagemba in 1606 A.D, there are hardly any entries about the Muslims.

⁹ Puyas are records of the events kept in the form of royal chronicles, clan genealogies, immigration books, etc. They are written in archaic Manipuri script and are generally kept in the custody of the pundits.

The specific date of the arrival of the Muslims in Manipur is not certain. But it has been generally accepted that the Muslims of Manipur first settled in Manipur after Maharaj Khagemba captured them in 1606 A.D. war. Maharaj Khagemba who ascended the throne of Manipur (1597-1652) had a battle with the Joint Cachari-Muslim forces in 1606 A.D. which led to the first settlement of Muslims in Manipur. The battle was the outcome of a trifle that took place between the brothers of Maharaj Khagemba. The two brothers of Maharaj Khagemba, Chingsomba and Sanongba had a fight over a boat which Chingomba borrowed from Sanongba. The boat was broken due to collision during boat race. Sanongba wanted the original boat only and did not agree to the settlement which Maharaj Khagemba was trying to seek between the two brothers. Sanongba along with his mother-queen Luwang Chanpombi and some followers fled to Cachar when Maharaj Khagemba tried to punish him because of his uncompromising attitude. In order to take revenge against his brother, Sanongba requested Dimasha Prataphil, the ruler of Cachar to help in attacking his brother, Maharaj Khagemba. Dimasha Prataphil sent a force to Manipur but was defeated by the Manipuri forces.

Dimasha Prataphil prepared for another invasion in Manipur. This time he took the help of Nawab of Taraf, Muhammad. Taraf is situated in the south-west portion of the district of Sylhet. Nawab of Taraf, Muhammad provided Dimasha Prataphil with 7000 soldiers according to Nongsamei, which is an exaggerated figure. Pangal Thorakpa puts the number of soldiers at 1007. It corresponds to the 1000 Muslim soldiers captured after the battle as recorded in the Royal Chronicle, Cheitharol Kumbaba.¹⁰ The joint Cachari and Muslim forces were defeated again by the Manipuri forces. The Cachari forces fled leaving behind the Muslim forces. Thus, the Muslim forces were made prisoners by Maharaj Khagemba.

¹⁰ R.K.Sanahal Singh (ed.) *Pangal Thorakpa* (Imphal: Liberty Publication Association, 1985) p.5

Cheitharol Kumbaba records the number of arrested persons and articles: 30 elephants, 1000 guns, 1000 Muslims, blacksmiths, artisans, musicians, washermen, horse and elephant keepers.¹¹

Nongsamei, records the prisoners as-

Turners, cobblers, weavers, cleaners, drummers, elephant and horse keepers, sword makers, utensil makers, milkmen, cultivators, trumpeters, etc. along with huge guns, horses, 30 elephants, 1000guns, palanquins, swords, flags bearing crescent moon...¹²

The main reason for not allowing the Muslim soldiers to return to Taraf by the Maharaj was because of the fear that, if the Muslim soldiers were made to return, then they would make another attack. Other possible reasons for settling them must have been the realization by the Maharaj, the possibility of further advancement in Manipur if they allow these Muslims who were masters in varied occupations to settle. Also, these Muslims were efficient soldiers who fought bravely against the Manipuris under their proficient commanders till the end even though the Cachari soldiers fled in between the battle. So, from these, one can clearly see that the Maharaj must have realized the need of these brave soldiers in safeguarding the territories of Manipur.

All the Muslim soldiers who were made prisoners by Maharaj Khagemba were given Meitei girls as their wives and made to settle down in the valley of Manipur. However, Nooriya Sheikh, an expert pottery-maker, made a beautiful pot by using the pottery wheel and presented it to Maharaj Khagemba. Maharaj was pleaded with him and gave Sheikh a girl as his wife.¹³ Umar Sheikh, Kalakhan, Suriya, Uliya and Manthe, experts in producing milk products were also given wives for their impressive and innovative presentation of milk products like ghee, cheese, etc to the Maharaj.¹⁴ Ponam Sheikh presented new varieties of vegetables for which he was given Laishram Tombi as his wife by the Maharaj. Sheikh along with his brother, Khamba planted mango seeds

¹¹ L.Ibungohal Singh and N.Khelchandra Singh (eds.) *Cheitharol Kumbaba* (Manipur: Manipur Sahitya Parishad, 1967) p.5

¹² Bhogeswar, O Singh and M.A.Janab Khan (eds.) *Nongsamei* (Imphal: Manipur Stationary and Printing Industries, 1973

¹³ *Ibid*, p.30

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.34.

brought from Taraf which were later presented to Maharaj Khagemba. Maharaj gave them land for taking up cultivation at Khumidok Hainou Khongnemi.¹⁵ The varied occupations practiced by these early Muslims shows that, most of them were not professional soldiers but were merely mercenaries in the modern sense or part-time soldiers who fought for booties. So, they readily accepted the order of Maharaj to settle down in Manipur by marrying the local girls.

Most of the Muslims at that period were petty artisans and cultivators by professions. Though they had a low status in their society, these professions were new and thus had a high status in Manipur. Therefore, they also realized the advantages of settling down in Manipur. Because of the hospitable and unorthodox attitude of the Maharaj as well as the accommodative and relaxed social norms of the Manipuri Meiteis, Meitei girls were given to the Muslims and were not forced to convert to the faith of the former unlike the other native land.

Maharaj Khagemba in one of his campaigns against Marings was helped by the Muslims led by Muhammad Shani, the commander of the Muslims. For their bravery, Muhammad Shani along with other soldiers (Miyamba, Shah Kusum, Akhong, Arupo, Suliya, Nampha, Phaidong, Tumya, Khamya, Aman, Khendo, Akrou) were given lands for cultivation. The lands were named after these soldiers.¹⁶

Most of the early Muslims were concentrated in and around Imphal city but later they shifted to places outside the capital city. It is believed that they first settled at Mayang Imphal. Being a sepoy class, however, the Rajas of Manipur stationed them at suitable places in the east in order to counter the attacks of the Burmese. One of the main reasons could be however, searching for places nearby river which will help in transportation and cultivation. According to Khainddir Khullakpam, most of the early Muslims settled at places like Moirangkhom, Singjamei, Bamon Leikei, which is near the Imphal and outside the capital at places like Patsoi, Khongjom Ngariyan, Sugnu, Uchiwa, Irong, Kazipat, Kairang Khumidok, Mayang Imphal, Lilong, Yairipok, Khetri, Kamang,

¹⁵ Pangal Thorakpa, *op.cit.*, p.18.

¹⁶ Nongsamei, *op.cit.*, pp.38-45.

Moirang Tasthang, Bishnupur, Kiyamgei, etc.¹⁷ In the early seventeenth century, Muslims started settling in far-flung areas, moving down even to the south of Imphal. Although Pangal settlements can be seen at different regions of Manipur, majority of them were settled in the south, east and south-east of the state.

Cheitharol Kumbaba records about the establishment of “Pangal Sanglen”, a Muslim administrative body, during the reign of Khagemba.¹⁸ The principal head of the Sanglen was designated as qazi. It was to take up the general administration of the Muslims. Various departments were also established keeping in view the importance of the skills the Muslims possessed. More detailed Muslim administrative bodies are given by T.C.Hodson. He writes:

The group of departments which was in charge of affairs relating to the Pangans of Muhammadan inhabitants, and consists of Panggan Sanglen, Panggan Inkhoh, Panggan Singa Loisang, Panggan Phundrei Loisang, Pagan Kumar, Pagan Mall (apparently of Muhammadan acrobats and performers), Panggan Likli.¹⁹

The functions of these departments are not specified. But, it can be inferred that Pagan Singa Loisang was concerned with the group who played singa (a kind of musical instrument), Phundrei Loisang with Muslim palanquin-makers, Pagan Inkhoh with the management of lands the Muslims possessed (Inkhoh means cultivable courtyard land or could have been the office). Pagan Kamar could be related to Muslim potters (kamar a corrupt form of the word kumhar).

In course of time, the Muslim society was divided into two groups – Khunja and Inghoh Sangba. The first group was the warriors and the second group was a mixed class of agriculturalists and artisans who performed diverse professions. Latter group had an inferior status than the former.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid, p.71

¹⁸ As cited in Syed Ahmed, *Manipur in transition: Role of Muslims from the 17th to the 19th Century*, M.Phil. Dissertation (Unpublished), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1998, p.19

¹⁹ T.C.Hodson, *The Meiteis* (Delhi: B.R.Publisation Corporation, 1908) p.70

²⁰ Pangal Thorakpa, *op.cit.*, p.XII

M.A.Janab writes about the presence of Muslims in Manipur prior to the reign of Maharaj Khagemba who all came probably during the reign of Maharaj Chalamba (1545-1562) or Maharaj Mungyamba (1562-1597). These early Muslims were called by the later Muslims as Aribam sagei or clan and were made to settle down by the Maharaj for the manufacture of guns.²¹

According to McCulloch, the original Manipuri Muslim population was increased by Muslims from the west, which came and settled in Manipur.²² Edward Gait in his "A History of Assam" supported the view of McCulloch and was of the opinion that, they were descendents of persons who took Mussalman wives before Hinduism became the state religion.²³ Mirza Fazlul Quadir wrote that, Manipuri Muslims grew out of the local converts into Islam. Since Muslims never ruled in that territory and very few of them went and settled in Manipur from the rest of India, major population is by conversion.²⁴

Contradicting the earlier arguments, another group of writers expressed a different view. To E.W.Dun, "The Mussulmans (of Manipur) are the descendents of Bengali immigrants: retain a knowledge of Hindusthani and Bengali (not one percent of those born to the country speak either) and are hardly distinguishable in appearance from the Bengalis, who have left Cachar."²⁵ J.Roy also wrote that "the ancestors of the Muslim families of Manipur came at different times from Sylhet and Cachar. They took Manipuri wives and settled in Manipur."²⁶

O. Tomba holds the view that the Manipuri Muslims might be the descendents of the Rohingya Muslims who came to Manipur from Arakan via Tiddim of Burma before the birth of Khamba and Thoibi of Moirang.²⁷ As most of the Manipuri Rajas and princes

²¹ As cited in Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.15

²² *Ibid*, p.16

²³ As cited in Md.Ahmed Ali Shah, *A brief historical study of Religion and Society of the Pangals of Manipur*, M.Phil Dessertation (Unpublished) Manipur University, Imphal, p.12

²⁴ Quoted in *Ibid*, p.13

²⁵ Quoted in *Ibid*

²⁶ Quoted in *Ibid*, p.14

²⁷ As cited in Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.16

on getting political disfavour used to flee to Sylhet or Cachar, according to Panchani, getting a chance to enter Manipur, rajas would take Muslims as servants who used to serve them.²⁸ As there are no records of these in the contemporary sources, all these theories can be hardly acceptable without proper resources.

There are records of further Muslim immigrants from time to time, but in small batches. In the year 1607, three Muslims by the names of Syed Ambiya, brother of Syed Auliya, (adviser to the Nawab of Taraf), Muhammad Najiri, Syed Abdullah and Syed Kalka Hussain came to Manipur. Syed Kalka Hussain returned back to Taraf and brought Quran, for the first time to Manipur.²⁹ In the year 1679, during the reign of Paikhomba 37 Muslims from Makak came to Manipur.³⁰ They were introduced to Maharaj and they presented elephants, palanquins, jewelleries, pigeons etc to the Maharaj. The Maharaj in return gave wives and made them settled in Manipur.³¹ During the same reign, another group of Muslims came from Gujarat and they were treated the same like the former group.³² During the reign of Charairongba (1697-1709), five Fakirs by the names Ponuwa, Molang, Wangulaba, Leikhun and Buta came to Manipur for making pilgrimage to a hill. Maharaj pleased with their powers of magic gave them cows, slaves and place to settle.³³

Muslim immigrants though they did not give explicit reasons for their coming to Manipur, many factors have led these Muslims to immigrate to the land. For instances like employment opportunities, relaxed society, accommodative and unorthodox nature of the rulers and the masses of Manipur acted as the main factors and opened the door to these immigrants.

The Burmese occupation of Manipur Valley had devastated and reduced the population of Manipur to a great extent. The period of Burmese Occupation, 1819-1825

²⁸ Chander Sheikhar Panchani, *Manipur- Religion, Culture and Society* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1987) p.87

²⁹ Nongsamei, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80

³⁰ Pangal Thorakpa, *op.cit.*, pp.43-44

³¹ Nongsamei, *op.cit.*, p.93

³² *Ibid*, p.100

³³ *Ibid*, pp.127-130

is known in the history of Manipur as Chahi Taret Khuntakpa (Seven Years of Devastation). Burmese suzerainty and dominance was felt not only in Manipur but all over north-east India. The king ordered to evacuate people in big chunks towards the Valley of Cachar. Due to the oppressions, large number of population left Manipur for Cachar, Tripura and Sylhet. Since it was not possible for the whole population to move out in time, those who survived after defeat in the battle had to face the Burmese atrocities. Burmese soldiers took with them enormous numbers of Manipuri of all ages and of both sexes as captives. The Manipuri Muslims too faced the Burmese atrocities and so migrated out of Manipur in large number along with the Meiteis.

In the words of R. Brown:

The Mussalman population appears, before the devastation of the country by the Burmese, to have attained a very considerable amount; but, as was the case with all the other sections of the Manipur community, the greater portion of it was carried into captivity by these ruthless invaders, and the present Mussalmans are the descendants of few that then escaped being capture.³⁴

According to Nongsamei Puya, pockets of Manipuri Muslims are even now at places like Cachar, Tripura, Assam, and Bangladesh.³⁵ Those pangals captured by the Burmese during the Seven Years of Devastation period continued to stay in Burma. There are a large number of Pangals in Bangladesh in the above mentioned places. Shakil Ahmed points out that Pangals were spread across some states and also to two foreign countries and in these places they are still speaking Manipuri language and are known by the term Pangal.³⁶ In other words, the present Pangal population of Manipur is a much-reduced population effected by the devastating Burmese Occupation.

³⁴ Cited in Syed Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.52

³⁵ Cachar - Baskandi (kainou, Sabal Laikai, Epham, Lanbabasti, Heinoumakhong, Khoragandi, Khangbara), Hilghat, Govindpur (Mojing), Zainagar, Lalpani, Singgarabandh, Dolugram, Tarapur, Sagar Moina, Tolen Khun, Moragang, Kanokpur, Baighar, Langir (Captanpur), Brandripara, Chiriparan, Lalang. Tripura – Latasora, Alali, Latiabil, Manik Bhandar, Mithirama, Barbarik, Kamalpur, Molaiya.

Assam – Hojai Salbagan

Bangladesh - Shripur, Jalalpur, Ghuramura, Mankhei, Kunagao, Bhanubil, Bhanughas, Samshar Nagar, Chaluya, Phultoli, Madhavpur, Maulvi Bazar

³⁶ Shakil Ahmed, "Socio-Economic survey of Manipuri Muslims," *The Milli Gazette*, March 1-15, 2004

Syncretistic Socio-Cultural Life of Muslims in Manipur

Islam as conceived and practiced traditionally by the Manipuri Muslims till the end of the nineteenth century was characterized as 'syncretistic'.³⁷ The local/Meitei influence on the Muslim society was pronounced not only in the overt behavioral features but also in the very structure of the Muslim society. The local/Meitei elements was seen in almost all the social and cultural aspects, like in social organization, life-cycle rituals, beliefs and behavioural patterns, not to mention the influences in the realm of language, food, dress, habits, etc. In course of time, significant cultural exchange took place between the Meiteis and the Muslims.

In principal, Islam does not permit the segregation or hierarchical divisions of its followers and they do not measure their status in terms of power, position, profession, or wealth. But, in spite of the theoretical equality, Muslims in India practice and follow an inbuilt caste system, corresponding to the Hindus. In Manipur, the main basis of the social division of the Muslims was not caste, but lineage or clan. The presences of clan system among the Indian Muslims have been reported from some Muslim communities, most widely known and studied is that of the Meo community. Manipuri Muslims give importance to their clans, which they have adopted from the Meiteis (hill tribes of Manipur also had clan system). Shortly after their settlement, they were given family titles. The awarding of family titles to the Muslims started with Maharaj Khagemba. The king on the basis of the specific occupation, place of settlement, place of origin, significant events, etc gave the family titles.³⁸ Later, with the increase in population these have developed into lineage groups or clan. The clan names were given, like the Meiteis to all the Muslims of Manipur, by the kings from time to time.

³⁷ Syed Ahmed, *Puritanical Movement among the Muslims in Manipur: Search for a Religious Identity*, Seminar Paper on Problems of Ethnicity and Identity in Contemporary Manipur, organized by Department of History, M.U. and Centre for Ethnic and Identity Studies, Manipur, October 27, 2006, p.1

³⁸ M.A.Janab Khan gives the list of Muslim clans that existed up to the reign of Garib Niwaz. Clans according to occupation – Phusamsagei, Phundreimayum, Khutheibam, Ayekpam, Korimayum, Chesum, Maibam etc

Place of settlement – Moijing, Thoubalmayum, Wangmayum

Place of origin – Makakmayum

Significant events – Yumkheibam, Sairem sagei, Thongkhongmayum, Bogimayum

The Muslims called this clan *sagei*, unlike *salais* of the Meiteis. The whole Meitei population is divided into seven *salais* or clans (*ningthouja*, *khuman*, *luwang*, *moirang*, *angom*, *ngangba*, *chengloi*). These seven *salais* are further divided into *yumnaks* or household. Along with the process of Hinduisation, the whole set up of the Meiteis was given a Hindu version by fitting the seven clans into the Hindu *gotra*.³⁹

The term “*Sagei*” means the people of a clan whose members are related by blood. Manipuri Muslims strictly followed the institution. They do not marry between the members of a particular *sagei*. They considered it as taboo though the Quran sanction it. They invite and co-operate their relatives and members of their *sageis* in any customary functions and ritual. There are factions and groups within their *sageis* and there are many families “*Yumnaks*” of the same clan in each *sagei*. These families formed sub-clans known as “*Singlup*”. For instance, *Khulakpam* and *Shajabam* form a common *sagei* as they had common forefathers. On the basis of professions, physical features, location, etc, there are separate entities within a *sagei*. The *Maibam sagei* is divided into *Maibam ‘Angouba’* and *Maibam ‘Amuba’* (on the basis of physical feature) while *Moijing sagei* divides into *Hairithabam* and *Awang* (on the basis of location). In a *sagei*, there are “*Phurups*”, “*Shinglups*”, “*Kangabu*” or “*Khut*” which are other smaller units of division based either on lineage or other social and customary considerations. *Khut* and *Kangbu* are based on the lineage of primary kinship and stands for their specific interest. The *phurup* is a group of people, which is more or less composed, of *sagei* members and also sometimes includes the neighbours of the area or what they called in Manipuri “*Leikai*”. A ‘*singlup*’ is a closely-knit group of the members of a *sagei* of a particular local surrounding, mostly kin groups living in a specific area.

Unlike the Meiteis, Muslims do not generally prefix or suffix the name of the *sagei* to their names, though there are exceptions. The clan *Merai* is regarded as *Sayyid*; clans like *Moijing*, *Chesam*, *Dolaipabam*, *Phisbam*, *Bogi*, *Phusam* are regarded as *Sheikhs*; and clans such as *Epham*, *Kazikhut*, *Panjaimayum*, *Yumkham* are regarded as

³⁹ T.C.Hodson, *op.cit.*, pp.182-187

Pathans.⁴⁰ They have imbibed some of its related ideology and practices but this sageis have equal footing in the society.⁴¹

Muslim marriage in Manipur is purely civil contract as per the Islamic law and solemnize with certain verses from the Quran along with the signing of nikah-nama. The Muslims followed the payment of dower or Mahr by the husband to the wife at the time of their marriage depending upon the agreement. The Muslims in Manipur have adopted various marriage customs from Meiteis like traditional practice of lineage or clan exogamy. They also practice elopement (chenba) as a popular way of acquiring mate, which is rarely practiced by Muslims of other places and the practice of negotiation (heinabá/thijaba). Muslims, like the Meiteis, perform an elaborate engagement ceremony, which consist: mauthiba chungba or mangol kaba, kwa-khaiba, hajipot-puba, sagei kwa-chatpa.⁴² Kwa-khaiba is the engagement for a marriage which is done through parents of the boy and the girl by going to the girl's house by the parents and relatives of the boy with betel-nuts and other eatables for eating together in token of acceptance of both the parties. In ceremony like Pana-Kwa Puba or Heijabot Puba, the parents and relatives of the boy go to the bride's place to fix the date for marriage. They usually go with betel-nuts and eatables for eating together (both parties). They follow Meitei's way of deciding and fixing the date of marriage and other local beliefs associated with marriage. In the past, various forms of entertainment are formed as a part of their marriage ceremony. They used to play kangjei (local version of hockey) and mukna (local version of wrestling) and sang ghazals, kasidas (panegyrics) throughout the night before the marriage. Meitei women married to the early Muslims played an important role in bringing the cultures of the Meitei, which are manifested specially in dance and music. During marriage functions, the bride danced along with her close companions a night before and on the marriage day. One of the most important and famous traditional dance of the Meiteis, Thabal Chongba (moonlight dance where young boys and girls dance hand in hand to the foot-thumping music, held during the traditional festival called yaoshang) was the main item of the programme. Mairbag jagoi, a unique dance form

⁴⁰ Nongsamei, *op.cit.*, pp.169-170.

⁴¹ See Syed Ahmed, *Regional Formulation of Islam in Manipur, op. cit.*

⁴² *Ibid*

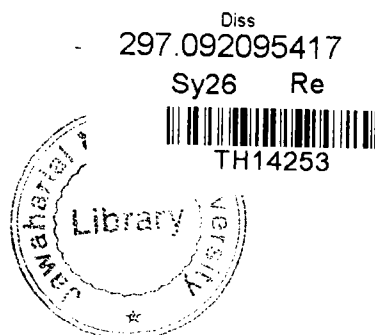
without music where the dancer danced with plates on their hands was also performed. The womenfolk also sing Khullang Esai (a folk based music form of the traditional Meiteis). Much of the lyrics of such marriage songs strongly emphasized the importance of the coming events in a girl's life and then the sorrow theme of leaving or separation from her beloved family.

Muslims in Manipur practice and belief in magic without much hesitation. Pangals also believe in sorcery and charms and those who practice the trait are known as Pangal Maiba, like their counterparts, Meitei Maibas.⁴³ Pangal Maibas have adopted many local practices, which are grafted into the system prescribed in the Islamic traditions. Pangal Maibas indulge in services for the treatment of those possessed by spirits, madness, hysteria, and all sorts of physical ailments. For curing and treatment, they do through prayers, rituals, offerings, mantras, sacrifices, physiotherapy, etc. They can even invoke spirits, especially Jinns (associated with Islamic tradition) and command them to do anything. Muslims also believe in the existence of local malignant spirits e.g., Helois, Bhuts, Leiren, etc and phenomena of evil eye (nazar) and Maibas invoke divine assistance to get rid of the influence of such things.⁴⁴

Unlike the general phenomena, the Muslims in Manipur were more influenced by traditional Meitei cultures rather than the Hindu Meiteis. By the time, Hinduism came to Manipur in the early eighteenth century, the process of assimilation of the Meitei cultures by Manipuri Muslims was almost completed. By the end of the seventeenth century, the socialization of the communities had integrated to a fair extent. Muslim (being a new community and added to Manipur population recently) soon got identified with the Meiteis. One of the most important arguments given is that 'Meitei' is not a religious community but rather Meitei identity is defined in terms of common language, common lineage system and way of life. Therefore, Panglas are included when the term 'Meiteis' is used along with seven salais social groups after the adoption of Meitei lineages and Meitei language as their mother tongue. For Bagat Oinam and D.A.Sadokpam, Meiteis of

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*



Manipur comprises of the Meitei Bamons (Manipuri Brahmins), Manipuri Meiteis (Kshytriyas as well as the followers of pre-Hindu Sanamahi faith) and Meitei-Pangals (Manipuri Muslims).⁴⁵ It is true that the terms 'Manipuri' and 'Meitei' are not synonymous because Manipuri is a broader term which includes all those communities who are living in the hills and valley. But to include Pangals (who came much before Hinduism in Manipur) in 'Meitei' along with Bamons and Lois (where Bamons are upper caste Hindu/Brahmins and Lois as lower caste when Hinduism was the main religion in the valley and adopted by the people), separating hill tribes like Kuki and Naga from Meitei is quite unacceptable.

Another argument is that Pangals are included in 'Meiteis' because they are 'Meitei-Pangals'. The Meiteis use the term 'Meitei-Pangal' that connotes to the mixed-heritage of the Pangal from Meitei women in their earlier period. The main argument is that the Muslims are so absorbed in Manipur culture and ethos that they are called Meitei-Pangal which means they are indigenized and acculturated. The leaders of the Sanamahi Movement went to the extent of holding the view that the Sanamahi deity (deity of the indigenous religion of the Meiteis) was worshipped not only by the Meitei community but also by the communities like Bamons, Lois, Pangals and hill tribes. As a result of long stay of Manipuri Hindus and Pangals outside Manipur because of Burmese Occupation (Seven Years Devastation), there was a new orthodoxy appeared in the practice of religion not only among the Hindus but also among the Pangals. Among the Pangals, the new orthodoxy was because of Islamic revivalism or Islamization and among the orthodox Hindus, the Pangals were considered as untouchables. There were many changes not only in their religion which make them to redefine and form new identities. Such changes among the Meiteis and the Pangals create suspicion and hostility against one another. Many humorous tales (Epom) and drama (Sumang Leela) reflects the negative characters of the other segregating and makes the interaction between Meiteis and Pangals negligible. Islamization process (discussed in next chapter in detailed) made the use of the term 'Meitei-Pangal' even more irrelevant. Shakil Ahmed

⁴⁵ Bhagat Oinam and D.A.Sadokpam, *Problems of Generalization*. Source: <http://www.india-seminar.com/2005/549/549%20b.oinam,%20d.a.sadokpam.htm>

points out that Meiteis and Pangals are different from social, ethnic and religious perspectives and yet they are one in what he calls 'Manipuriness'.⁴⁶ They are united by language, the respect they have for each other and undying love they have for the land.

Shakil Ahmed further argues that if the Meiteis say they are Meiteis, Pangals are naturally Pangals certainly not 'Meitei-Pangal', a term imposed, confusing between an ethnic group and a linguistic community by the Britishers and later carried on by those who wanted to absorb the Muslims.⁴⁷ Merely speaking Manipuri or Meiteilon and living in the valleys in different parts, intermingling with the Meiteis cannot make Pangals to identify themselves as Meitei-Pangal and absorb them when we term Meitei in the broader sense. It is always better not to fossilized either into 'Meitei-Pangal' or 'Pangal-Meitei' which has created a lot of unnecessary problems in the state and confusion outside. He gave two important examples to prove his point that Pangals are not Meitei-Pangals.⁴⁸ Firstly, the Muslim community had been treated as a separate and honourable community since their arrival in Manipur. They are outside the seven clan system of Meitei social stratification. Therefore they are outside the pale of socio-religious definition of who is a Meitei. Secondly, it is the literary and historical records which he used to set his other example. According to him, Cheitharol Kumbaba does not refer to Muslims as Meitei-Pangals rather as Pangals and Pangal Thorakpa (an original puya which exclusively deals with the arrival of the Muslims) calls Muslims as Pangals. British writers referred to Muslims as either Pangal or Muhammadan though some of them used the term Meitei-Pangal when referring to Pangals due to their confusion between an ethnic group and a language community. Many writers argue that adopted cultural elements are seen in the social organizations of the Muslims like the clan system, in social customs like marriages, music, language, dress, dwelling patterns, games etc. except religion.

⁴⁶ Shakil Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.2

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Shakil Ahmed, *Pangals are not Meitei-Pangals*. Source:

http://www.kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=kshow&kid=301&Idoc_session=83b61c978b4b1e92c68382fdofcc5012

R.Brown writes:

They have no Masjid, and are for the most part very ignorant of the religion they profess.⁴⁹

Contradicting with this point of R.Brown, B.C.Allen writes:

There are no masonry mosques in the state, and foreign Muhammadans in Imphal have a separate Maulvi of their own.⁵⁰

He further writes:

Their (the muslims) Maulvis are Manipuri, who have been sent to Cachar to be instructed in the principles of their faith by Maulvis from Hindustan. They are said to be fairly well acquainted with the doctrines of their religion; they abstain from pork and bury their dead...⁵¹

Therefore, all these arguments emphasize that Muslims in Manipur were conscious of their religion from before and there are no Meitei elements creeping in the field of religion like other parts of India. As a result of mass conversion of Hindus to Islam in other parts of India, who all brought with them their traditions, which when mixed with Islamic traditions led to such synthetic innovations. There was no such incidence as mass Meitei conversion to Islam except the Meitei girls married to the early Muslims. It was the general influence which one minority community gets from a majority community because of their co-existence over a long period of time and the role of Meitei girls married to Muslims in bringing Meitei elements resulted in the process of assimilation of the Manipuri Muslims in local society. The liberal and unorthodox attitude of the Kings and the subjects of Manipur of the early seventeenth century as well as the policy of seclusion adopted from the reign of Garib Niwaz with the coming of Hinduism thereafter played an important role in maintaining a distinct Muslim identity.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Syed Ahmed, *Manipur in transition, op.cit.*, p.78

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Ibid*

⁵¹ Quoted in *Ibid*

Col.McCulloch wrote

The Munniporee Mussulman population arose from Munniporee men having taken as wives Mussulman women...before the regular introduction of Hindooism. On the introduction of that religion, they, with their descendents, were obligated to become Mussulmans.⁵²

Contrary to the above arguments, some are of the view that, there were many converts to Islam in Manipur from local people. In Thoubal Moijing village, there is a clan called 'Monsam' whose forefathers were converted to Islam though they belong to some tribes originally.⁵³ Muhammad, who inherited the 'Moijing' clan was also originally a Meitei Rajkumar.⁵⁴ And so they came to the conclusion that there are many converts in many villages both from plain and hill communities.

Many historians hold the view that Manipur was under the influence of Hinduism from a very early period. According to R.K.Jhalajit, cultural contacts were established between Manipur and India and the Vaishnavite influences in Manipur as early as seventh century.⁵⁵ In spite of the evidence of the presence of Brahmans as early as fifteenth century, they had no significant impact on the life of the Meiteis in the absence of any support from the king. Movement of some Brahmans due to the pressure of Aurangzeb's religious policy to the eastern region which were beyond the Mughal Empire and long conflict between the Mughals and the Ahoms in the seventeenth century encouraged the revivalism of Hinduism in the northeast region.⁵⁶ As a part and result of these, revivalist activities are also seen in Manipur during the period. It is generally accepted that Charairongba also known by the Hinduised name, Pitambar Singh, was the first Manipur king to be initiated into the Hindu tradition. As evident from the royal chronicle, he never attempted to impose the new religion upon the masses. It was during the reign of Garib Niwaz, the son of Charairongba, that a process of forcible Hinduization was carried out with a series of formalities and strict rules of orthodoxy. The rapid

⁵² Quoted in Md. Ahmed Ali Shah, *op.cit.*, p.12

⁵³ Cited in *Ibid*, p.15

⁵⁴ Nongsamei, *op.cit.*, p.169

⁵⁵ Quoted in Syed Ahmed, *Manipur in transition, op.cit.*, n.18, p.79

⁵⁶ Argument given by Gangumei Kagui in *Ibid*, p.30

proselytizing activities of Garib Niwaz in order to impose the alien faith have brought great resentment to the Meiteis.

N. Tombi describes:

The people of Manipur with their deep sentimental life and respect for their forefathers must have raised deep opposition. The manner in which the great cult of Vaishnavism was spread with the help of the royal power and influence; rich treasures of books containing valuable legends and profound knowledge recorded after laborious research by the ancient forefathers were collected with the order of the king and made them into a huge pile in a public place. The pile of books was burnt, as the story has it, in the same ceremony and solemn manner in which dead-ceremony is cremated. This episode dug deep into the sentiments of the scholars and enlightened section of the population although they could not openly revolt against the king. Even after acceptance of great cult of Vaishnavism, the sentiment of bitterness between the preachers and the general population could not subside.⁵⁷

Since the Meiteis already had a culture complete with religion and a way of life dictated by them, it was not possible to accept Vaishnavism (a new faith) easily at the cost of their traditional belief system. In order to satisfy the sentiments of the people, the king compromise with the traditional followers of the ancient religion leading to a process of assimilation of the traditional Meitei beliefs and Hinduism. Many of the traditional elements and beliefs became part and parcel of the Meitei-Hindu culture. So, the process of Hinduisation of Meitei religion or Sanskritization was started.

The impact of Hinduism was felt not only on the Meitei society but also a significant impact on the tribals and the Pangals of Manipur. Since the days of Khagemba, there existed a bond of proximity and closeness between the Meitei and Muslims. But with the imposition of Hinduism, the people from the hill and the Pangals came to be regarded as “impure”, thus creating a distance or gap between the Meiteis and hill-tribes on one side and with Pangals on the other. K.B.Singh argues that the distance between the two groups (hill tribes and Meiteis on one hand and Pangals and Meiteis on the other) became wider than ever when the Meiteis became Hindus. To the orthodox Meitei Hindus the tribals and Pangals were like the untouchables of Hindu India.⁵⁸ The

⁵⁷ N.Tombi Singh, *Manipur- A Study* (New Delhi: Rajesh Printing Press, 1972) p.28

⁵⁸ K.B.Singh, “Social Stratification and Mobility in Manipur,” in S.M.Dubey (ed.) *North-East India: A Sociological Study* (Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1978) pp.62-63

changing social system in a way resulted in the stoppage of further Muslim migration in Manipur.

G.K.Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh argue that unlike Vaishav Meiteis who continued their pre-Hindu Sanamahi cult even after conversion to Hinduism, Pangals on the other hand follow only Islamic cult though they are not as strict fundamentalist like Muslims elsewhere.⁵⁹ Therefore, they are the naturalized people of Manipur, following Islam just as Meiteis who follow Hinduism and Nagas following Christianity.⁶⁰ Pangals are equally at ease being a part and parcel of Manipur (by adopting many cultural elements and living side by side with Meiteis for centuries even earlier than many other communities) and Islamic ummah (retaining their Islamic identity by following Islamic injunctions) at the same time. Therefore 'Pangal' stands for the self conscious people who have a sense of dignity and believe in coexistence with other cultures without being overtaken by the other.⁶¹

⁵⁹ G.K.Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh, *Women of Manipur* (New Delhi: A.P.H Publishing Corporation, 1997)

⁶⁰ Shakil Ahmed, *Socio-Economic survey of Manipuri Muslims*, *op.cit.*, p.2

⁶¹ *Ibid*

CHAPTER II

FORMATION OF DISTINCT MUSLIM IDENTITY

The trends of multiculturalism has paved the way for treating religion which is the chief basis of demarcating one group from another, as a distinct cultural and ethnic community.¹ There is often a tendency to interpret culture in terms of religious framework. But the fact is that culture is much larger than the religious values and practices. In spite of differences, religion and culture tend to converge powerfully to provide a distinct identity to a community in a multi-religious society.² In today's context the concept of identity is much more than personality and personal identity.³ Each one of us has multiple identities and is not possible to have only one or single identity like national identity by totally giving up or subordinating other identities to national identity which is insisted by some people. However it is possible that one identity may matter more than the other in a given context and that context may keep changing. There is proliferation of different identities like linguistic, religious, and communal and the more recent being of ethnic identity and identity assertion. Such ethnic consciousness existed even in the past but now the degree of consciousness is varied and is stronger today.⁴

According to Pradip Phanjoubam, 'joining the mainstream' has been almost a call for the negation of the regions collective memories of its past.⁵ Opening up and direct contact with the outside world is making the smaller communities realize how different they are from the rest not only racially but culturally and economically as well. In Phanjoubam's own words what are called 'nations within the nation begin to withdraw

¹ See Paramjit S. Judge, *Religion, Identity and Nationhood – The Sikh Militant Movement* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005) p.15

² *Ibid*, p.29

³ Rooplekha Borgohain, "Identity and Identity Assertion: some issues," in Girin Phukhon and N.L.Dutta (eds.) *Politics of Identity and Nation Building in North-East India* (New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1997) p.9

⁴ Anthony D.Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p.45

⁵ There are two options only and that is to either turn its back to its own history, or else, to believe that the people of this region have little or no history of their own that is worth the while, and that it would be for their own good if they adopted the mainstream history. Pradip Phanjoubam, "Ethnic Identity and Community Relationship in the North-East," in Kailash S.Aggarwal (ed.) *Dynamics of Identity and Inter group Relations in North-East India* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1999) p.141

within themselves'.⁶ In the initial stage of ethnic mobilization, primordial identities are consolidated but subsequently turn into an instrument to seek political and economic advantages.⁷ Factors that give rise to identity consciousness and identity formation are dominant groups' role towards assimilation, growing economic competition among different ethnic groups and political and developmental processes enforced by the state.⁸ As such, identity formation is a historical process, the character of which is determined by time and space.

The efforts by certain groups to assert their identity can be regarded as strategies for challenging oppression and injustice. Their proclamation that they are different and attaching importance of rediscovering their roots and strengthening group solidarity may be seen as necessary and legitimate attempts to escape from their state of subjugation and enjoy a certain measure of dignity.⁹ Identities often heightened by the perception of a threat from a group external to it, are often deeply integral to a person's sense of self, defining as 'I' by placing it against a background of 'we'.¹⁰ Such assertion of identity can turn into self-absorption and isolation, and in any time into intolerance of others which can lead to even ethnic cleansing, xenophobia and violence.

Identity Assertion and Conflicts among Different Ethnic groups in Manipur

The problem of identity has become a phenomenon that is not limited to any particular community only. Identity problem has assumed a special dimension in Manipur whereby the various ethnic groups in the state of Manipur which once existed as open

⁶ *Ibid*, p.143.

⁷ M.N.Karna, "Ethnic Identity and Socio-Economic Processes in North-East India" in Kailash S.Aggarwal, *op.cit.*, p.29

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ Imtiaz Ahmed, "Basic Conflict of 'We' and 'They' between Religious Traditions, between Hindus, Muslims and Christians in India," in Imtiaz Ahmed, et.al (eds) *Pluralism and Equality – Values in Indian Society and Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000) p.164.

¹⁰ Cited in Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Islam, Communities and the Nation – Muslim Identities in South Asia and Beyond* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1998) p.7

communities without attaching any importance to the distinctiveness, have now transformed into close communities, with an increasing awareness and consciousness of their separate common identities based on history, customs and beliefs.¹¹ According to Rajat Kanti Das, the situation is created by so many tribes of different size and political pull, in interaction with themselves and with the dominant community of the state i.e. the Meitei community.¹² The role of the Meitei cannot be undermined here. This is by virtue of their dominant position which influenced the course of the tribal history in Manipur more than the tribes themselves and now again with the dimension of Meiteis being equally involved with the question of identity like any other group.¹³ The problem has been intensified with the formation of underground outfits by almost every ethnic group belonging to their respective groups, either directly or indirectly supported by the masses.

The people inhabiting Manipur as a whole have been divided mainly into two categories – the tribals (which consists of Naga group of tribes and Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of tribes) and the non-tribal communities (which include the Meiteis – the majority group in the state and Muslims – a small minority in the state). There are 33 recognized tribes in the state.¹⁴ The polarization of different groups by the British Administration for their administrative conveniences in turn created a sense of differentiation among the people of Manipur which is still very much prevalent between the tribals and the Meiteis, and between the tribals of different communities- particularly between the Nagas and the Kukis. The polarization of different groups by the British Administration for their administrative conveniences in turn created a sense of differentiation among the people of Manipur which is still very much prevalent between the tribals and the Meiteis, and

¹¹ Syed Ahmed, *Puritanical Movement among the Muslims in Manipur: Search for a Religious Identity*, Seminar Paper on Problems of Ethnicity and Identity in Contemporary Manipur (Unpublished), October 27 2006, Organized by Dept. of History, Manipur University and Centre for Ethnic and Identity Studies, Manipur.

¹² Rajat Kanti Das, *Manipur Tribal Scene: Studies in Society and Culture* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1985), P.9

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.8-9.

¹⁴ Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gante, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Koireng, Kom, Lamkang, Lushai, Maram, Maring, Mao, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Puram, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Salhte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Poumai, Tarao, Kharam and any Kuki tribes.¹⁹ There are a bunches of other tribes also like Mate, Inpui etc still struggling for their inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list of the constitution.

between the tribes of different communities- particularly between the Nagas and the Kukis.¹⁵

There has been a new dimension in the sphere of co-operation or competition among the tribals and the Meiteis. On one hand, this is due to modernization, fast changing socio-economic and political life of the people, continuing expansion of education, pressure of desirable land (extension of Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 in the hill areas) and coming up of various tribal movements which opposed the strong influence of Meitei culture.¹⁶ On the other hand it is also the fear of the Meiteis of loosing their dominant power especially with the demand of the hill tribes for the creation of a separate state which according to them will affect the territorial integrity of Manipur.

What has brought Manipur to its present state of chaos and incoherence is the demand by leaders of the Naga resistance movement that all the hill areas of Manipur inhabited by the Nagas should form part of the proposed sovereign state of Nagalim.¹⁷ The Meiteis are determined to protect every inch of their territory. Similarly, the Nagas are as determined to break away from Manipur and join the Naga confreres in the ideal state of Nagalim. Nabashyam Heigreijam, Convenor of United Council Manipur (UCM) asserted that, "As far as recognizing this so-called right of the Nagas is concerned, it is impossible as it would mean conceding to their demand for giving away large parts of Manipur to a Naga state. We will oppose any attempts to divide Manipur with our lives."¹⁸

The Nagas also asserted that "The stand of the Meiteis that the Nagas cannot have aspirations to live as one people is a clear indication that they want to perpetuate their

¹⁵ P.T.Hitson Jusho, *Politics of Ethnicity in North-East India with special reference to Manipur* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2004) pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ For example through Manipuri language - Manipuri language as a lingua franca, *Ibid*, p.53.

¹⁷ In recent years many Nagas have begun using the term 'Nagalim' to describe the Naga homeland too distinguish it from the state of Nagaland. 'Lim' is a word in Ao dialect that refers to land. The new term distinguishes between the state of Nagaland and what is seen as the territory of the Nagas without the expansive connotation of the term Greater Nagaland used by the Indian media.

¹⁸ *Hindustan Times*, August 3, 2001.

dominance over the Nagas to which the Nagas can no longer bear.”¹⁹ The Nagas of Manipur as well as of Nagaland declared to merge all Naga inhabited areas into one administrative unit i.e. creation of an extended ‘Greater Nagaland’ or Nagalim. The relation between the two communities has been severely affected after the June 14, 2001 cease-fire agreement when the Meiteis took to the streets in protest against the agreement executed between the Government of India and the NSCN (I-M). The opposition is based on pre-conceived speculation that the extension of Naga ceasefire to Manipur would mean a loss or changes to the present political boundary of Manipur.

The conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis has a long history. It is argued that the relationship between the two groups has not been cordial ever since the British landed into the region. British encouraged the extensive spread of Kukis settlements with the sole objective to use the Kukis as a screen against the disloyal Nagas which resulted in increasing of conflicts between the two groups, ever since the Kukis migrated to the present habitats.²⁰ According to Gangummei Kabui, “Nagaisation process was set rolling with the British creation of the Naga identity.”²¹ This ultimately resulted in seeking by the Nagas of Manipur and Nagaland to integrate their inhabitats to create an extended ‘Greater Nagaland’. Among the Nagas, NSCN emerged as the strongest militant group, later split into two factions – NSCN-K led by Khaplang and NSCN I-M led by Issak Swu and Muivah. With more consciousness of their separate identity, attempts were made to bring all Kukis and allied tribes together under one ethnic group. One such attempts was the formation of political organizations like the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) in 1972 which redefines the Chins of Burma, the Kukis of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland, and the Lushai (Mizo) of Mizoram and other areas as one nationality called Zomi.²² The Kukis also demanded for the upgradation of the Sadar Hills areas dominated by them to a full-fledged Sadar Hills district. By 1980s there was formation of different militant groups by the Nagas and the Kukis to safeguard their interests and preserve their identity.

¹⁹ Naga Student’s Union, Delhi, Press Statement, June 26, 2001

²⁰ See P.T.Hitson Jusho, *op.cit.*, p.43

²¹ Gangummei Kabui, “Political Development in Tribal North-East India: A Historical Perspective,” in Budhadeb Chaudhari (ed.) *Tribal Transformation of India: Ethnopolitics and Identity-Crisis, Vol. III* (New Delhi, Inter-India Publications, 1992) p.208

²² T.Gougin, *Discovery of Zoland* (Churachanpur: Zomi Press, 1980) p.57

Kuki militant groups like Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki National Front (KNF), Kuki National Organization (KNO) are also actively operating in the state. The apprehension about each other's movement compounded with their strong attachment to the land they both occupied and ethnic identity ultimately led to the outbreak of violence of 1990s between Nagas and Kukis. With such outbreak of ethnic conflicts between the Nagas and the Kukis, the process of assimilation and merger of the smaller tribes into bigger and recognized tribes especially into the Naga or the Kuki has been taking place in Manipur.²³ On one hand such efforts were made by small tribal groups. On the other, some sections of Kuki groups want to keep themselves divided or identified by their sub-group identities such as the Chin, the Kuki and the Mizo identity. According to R.K.Roy Burman, "The major tribes like Hmar and Paite started claiming themselves to be distinct ethnic categories; only the Thadous who constituted the ethnic core of the Kukis continued to hold on their Kuki identity."²⁴ Kuki groups have not been able to forge a common identity unlike the Nagas because of the attempts of the dominant Kuki tribe (dominant Thadou) to over-rule the distinct identity of other category of Chin-Kuki tribes which has been strongly resented by the smaller tribes like Paites, Gangtes, Hmars, etc. as they fear that they will be squeezed under the swelling wave of the dominant Thadou community.²⁵ The Paites, Vaipheis and some other tribes of Kukis in view of their location of territory bordering Myanmar and at the same retaining the Kuki designation, would also like to keep alive their Chin identity. One such good example is the ethnic clashes that broke out between the Kukis and the Paites in June 1997, lasting for nine months in Churachandpur. It is necessary here to look at the consequences of such ethnic conflicts for other minority communities in the state and their role in the conflict.

²³ P.T.Hitson Jusho, *op.cit.*, p.9

²⁴ R.K.Roy Burman, "Modernization among Tribal People on Indian Borders," in K.S.Mathur (ed.) *Studies in Social Change* (Lucknow: Ethnographic & Folk Cultures Society, 1973) p.119

²⁵ P.T.Hitson Jusho, *op.cit.*, pp.39-41

Formation of Muslim Identity in Manipur

Unlike other religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism) Islam emerged not from the historical depths of Indian society. Muslims are not distributed evenly across the country's territory and there is no such comparatively large area where they constitute a compact majority except for Kashmir valley. Rasheeduddin Khan divides all Indian Muslims according to social-cultural factors into six regional categories²⁶:

1. The densely populated plains of the Ganges, that is, the troubled Hindi belt
2. Kashmir, with the predominance of the Muslim population drawn in the whirlpool of international rivalry and sentimental national policy
3. The frontier state of Assam, which is under the influence of restive tribes, the growing Muslim population and markedly ethno-religious ecology
4. Gujarat, including Kutch and Surat, populated by compact communities of Muslim traders
5. Deccan, Maharashtra and Mysore, with area of mixed culture
6. The extreme south- Tamil Nadu and Kerala- more or less integrated culturally, and regionally oriented in political terms.

Imtiaz Ahmed argues:

A fundamental distinction exists between the religious traditions which are indigenous to this country and can at best be regarded as offshoots of Hinduism and those that came from outside the country and succeeded in establishing themselves on Indian soil. A further distinction divides these religious traditions of alien origin – between those which succeeded in establishing a peaceful and congenial relationship with the dominant Hindu tradition and their adherents are tolerated and accepted without demonstrable evidence of social conflict and opposition, and those whose relationship with the dominant Hindu tradition was marked by confrontation and conflict and whose adherents are tolerated but not accepted... Islam and Christianity are seen to fall into the second category of religious traditions.²⁷

There is substantial difference in the ethnic situation of the Muslims in different regions. North Indian Muslims were basically rulers and colonizers and so enjoyed elitist status in the country. They were also not under pressure to become acculturated into the

²⁶ Boris Klyuev, *Religion in Indian Society: The Dimensions of 'Unity in Diversity'* (Sterling Publishers, 1989) pp.113-114

²⁷ Imtiaz Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.157

indigenous culture. Unlike the north Indian Muslims, Muslims in eastern India in general and Manipur in particular have a non-elitist background and a strong socio-cultural integration.²⁸ There was not much orientation towards ethnic self-assertion and ethnic conflict because of such socio-cultural assimilation and so enabled Muslims in the Manipur state to accept their minority status more naturally.²⁹ Muslim community in other parts of India has increased in number on account of natural growth and also because of conversions from other religions, but in the case of the state of Manipur, such was not the case. There was no incidence of mass conversion to Islam.

Muslims in Manipur existed as an ethnic group (till the end of 19th century), not necessarily attach subjective importance to the distinctiveness. However, this group soon transformed into a community as a consequence of the ongoing separate common identity movements among other communities in the state and its related ethnic conflicts making Muslims in the state more consciousness of a common and shared identity based on their religious affiliation. We can explore the factors responsible for the development of such identity consciousness among the Manipuri Muslims. Some other important factors that lead to rise of ethnic identity among the Muslims in Manipur are discussed here.

Factors Responsible for the Rise of Separate Muslim Identity in Manipur

Political factor:

India is a secular state and unlike western secularism is not anti-religious or irreligious. Indian secularism is more for impartiality and neutrally towards all religions and religious pluralism. Religious pluralism via secularism is encouraged ideologically by the state, and safeguarded through various articles of the Constitution of India. This resulted in the maintenance of the traditional religious orientation which is the characteristic of the

²⁸See A.R.Saiyed, et.al (eds.) *Religion and Ethnicity among Muslims* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1995) p.265

²⁹ *Ibid*

Indian society and also strengthening of different religious identities. As a consequence of various political changes in post-independent India, Muslim ethnic identity has increased. Three main features of the Indian polity, namely, Indian secularism, democratic election processes, and the minority status of Indian Muslims are important in identity formation of Muslims in India in general.³⁰ The process of elections in India has become another source of support and encouragement of ethnicity. It is quite usual in any democratic state to mobilize voters on the basis of ethnic affiliation and loyalty or 'ethnic' as factor in developing election strategies. These strategies are designed mainly towards seeking block ethnic voting. In the case of Muslims, there are several ethnocentric and self-assertive demands in addition to usual religious appeal.

S.A.Shaida rightly argues that it is a fact to have a greater sense of identification and group-solidarity among minority community than majority community.³¹ The sense of solidarity and identification with their own group becomes more prominent and stronger among the former community because of various reasons and it strengthened the in-group solidarity. Such loyalties is perfectly harmless and justifiable until and unless it is within certain specified and definite areas of operation and not effecting the common goals and interests of society as whole. However, historical and socio-economic factors are harmful forms of communalism and many inter-group conflicts. Another important role is played by the dominant group in strengthening Muslim ethnicity. The tendency of the dominant group to treat Muslims primarily on the basis of their religious identity and not other affiliations compel them to think of themselves in religio-ethnic terms rather than regional or occupational terms.

Economic factor:

There is not much change in Muslim's economic structure even after independence. Unlike Muslims in other states, Manipuri Muslims in the state have to

³⁰ A.R.Saiyed , et.al (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.269

³¹ S.A.Shaida, "The Cultural Identity of Indian Muslims," in Zafar Iman (ed.) *Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975) p.193

depend either on self-employed activities or government-service sectors for livelihood. Muslims perform all sorts of low-profile activities like hotel-industry, shop-keeping, rickshaw pulling, assembling of cycles and motor vehicles, motor transport, carpentry, etc. to make a living. Their representation in white collar job is quite low in the state. According to a survey conducted by All Manipur Muslim's Organization Coordinating Committee (AMMOCOC) in 1998 on Muslims share in service sector, reveals I class – 53, II class – 101, III class – 217, IV class – 16,653 servicemen.³² Their presence in high class jobs is negligible as can be notice from the above figures. And there is not only a visible lack of proportional representation of Muslims in the government service sector but also of continuous decline of their share over the years. Unsatisfactory economic condition of the Muslims overall, the intense economic competition among the ethnic groups and their standing vis-à-vis the other communities (because their condition has deteriorated and become more pronounced over the years) instilled the Muslims' mind a sense of being 'marginalized' or 'neglected' and a justification for their seclusion and exclusiveness.³³ Such life experiences and religious consciousness due to Islamization and many other factors together strengthened their religious identity.

Ideological changes:

The ideals of equality of opportunity and individual's freedom which found expression in the constitution have played an important role in breaking the age-old structure. Although such ideological effect is limited before to few educated people who are aware of the newer ideas of equality, autonomy and individual worth, but with more easy means of communication this days there is more awareness of one's right and not accepting or tolerance of social discrimination and unprivileged position. For achieving the ideals of equality and self-determination, ethnic identity and ethnic group mobilization seem to be necessary. Identities were articulated in order to marginalize and make irrelevant the actual distinctions and heterogeneities within the communities.

³² Pamphlet released by All Manipur Muslim's Organization Coordinating Committee (AMMOCOC), 1998

³³ Syed Ahmed, (2006) *op.cit.*

Paramjit S. Judge argues, “the construction of identity on the basis of any criteria, other than occupational and class positions in which heterogeneity exists, is basically an ideological process in the political space.”³⁴ For Indian Muslims who have been pushed to less privileged situation, such identity assertion are all together a different necessity and crucial for their upliftment.

Homogenization process:

It is always problematic in any pluralistic society especially in a state like Manipur, to equate or identify dominant religion's symbols and rituals with Manipuri. There was a new identity crisis among the Meiteis because of the process of Hinduisation which placed them somewhere belonging neither to the Meiteis nor to the Hindus.³⁵ Meiteis used to have their own unique customs, culture, institutions and religious beliefs and practices. However, there has been vast transformation in their institutions and identity. Unlike other groups like hill tribes, Meiteis converted to Hinduism which is mainly due to the capacity of a cultural group who adopted the new religion for carrying the symbols and meanings of the new religion as argued by many.³⁶ There were other two important non-religious reasons for the adoption of Hinduism by the Meitei kings who played the main role in spreading the religion. The first reason might be that the Brahminical influence sanctioned legitimacy of the monarchy without the use of force, threat or intimidation. It is important to see the linkage of Meitei traditional legends to Hindu mythology. According to such myths, the valley inhabited by the Hindu Meiteis is claimed as the mythical land where the sacred marriage between the Manipuri princess Chitrangada and the Panduva hero of the Mahabharata, Arjun. And so the name Kangleipak was changed to Manipur, relating to the Mahabharata. Another myth refers

³⁴Paramjit S. Judge, *op.cit.*, p.78

³⁵ Scholar like Gangumei Kabui are of the opinion that the use of the term ‘Hinduisation’ to ‘Sanskritization’ is more appropriate to explain the new process of the socio-religious change that took place in Meitei society as Meiteis were never part of Hindu society before the beginning of the 18th Century and so climbing up the caste ladder was not the major concern among the Meiteis unlike other places in India.

³⁶ See, for example, Clifford Greetz, *The Interpretation of Primitive Culture: Selected Essay* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1973) p.4

the valley to the land where Hindu deities Shiva and Parvati introduced the Ras Leela. So there is possibility of the king of Manipur patronizing the Hindu religious preceptors to legitimize consolidation of the monarchical structure. The second reason has been because of the policy for the political survival. It was mainly the urge of the king of the Manipur to forge the military aliens with those Hindu countries like Ahom kingdom of Assam and Tekhao kingdom of Tripura in the West, as Manipur was witnessing frequent attacks by the eastern countries like the Burmese invaders.

The kings and all the Meiteis after conversion were declared as Kshetriya and the immigrant Brahamins formed a separate caste outside the Meitei society. Thus Hinduisation of Manipur brought about some notion of 'purity and pollution' of caste system. It was also important to defy or replace traditional philosophies of the Meiteis religious life with the propagation of new faith (Hinduism) and with the order of the king there was burning of all collections such as scriptures and records of old indigenous religion (better known in the history of Manipur as *Puya Meithaba*). Also the images of traditional deities of Meiteis were destroyed and instead Hindu temples were constructed in their places. In another case, the traditional deities who belonged to the royal families like Nongshaba, Yumthei Lai, Pakhangba and Taibangkhaiba were not destroyed but the role of the traditional priest were denied and Brahmins were appointed instead to worship these deities.³⁷

But this does not mean that their pre-Hindu religion and culture has been completely uprooted by such process, rather their old values are still maintained simultaneously with socio-cultural and religious practices of Hinduism which they adopted. It is the conflict and compromise between these two forces that keeps the Meiteis somewhere between the culture of the surrounding hill tribes and the maintain Hindus what Homi K Bhaba and M.N.Srinivas called as 'culture's in between' and

³⁷ See Saroj Nalini Parratt, *The Religion of Manipur: Beliefs, Rituals and Historical Development* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1980) p.157; L.Ibungohal Singh and L.Nilakanta Singh, *Chaitharol Kumbaba* (Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parishat, 1967) p.72

‘regional Hinduism’ respectively.³⁸ The process of Hinduisation brought about a division by which Meiteis started feeling ritually superior and categorized other communities like hill tribes and Muslims as untouchables. These groups were further alienated when the hill people adopted Christianity in the early part of the 20th century and Islamic Revivalism started among the Muslims in the last quarter of the 19th century. The distance between the groups is now accelerated particularly by the new political movements carried with ethnic and tribal identities like Naga, Kuki, Meitei, etc (unlike earlier accelerated by the socio-religious factors). These new movements based on ethnic identities are more dangerous as it results in communal violence and ethnic cleansing.

One such new movement based on ethnic identity is the Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis which started as socio-religious movement to remove the Brahminical domination but soon assumed other political goals.³⁹ The origin of the ‘Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis was their feeling of safeguarding a distinct culture and belief that they have been constantly threatened by various exogenous factors like ‘Hinduism’, ‘Burmese invasion’, ‘British colonialism’ and later on by the ‘unification with the Indian Union’. The rise of the movement during colonial period and more strongly at present is due to the rise of the Brahminical power in one hand, and new trend of Meiteisation which do not conform to the process of Hinduisation and modernization of Meitei society and culture.⁴⁰ Though Hinduism in India by nature is very assimilative and accommodative, ethnic communities belonging to the Austro-Asiatic and Mongoloid is still rejected on the racial and ethnic basis. One of the best examples is the mainland Hindus’ rejection of Meiteis to be perfect Hindus which ultimately resulted in Meiteis’ return to their pre-Hindu society. Thus in terms of the distinct Meitei socio-cultural

³⁸ Homi K.Bhaba uses the term ‘culture’s in between’ to denote the dilemma of those migrant communities who absorb certain aspects of its host culture while still retaining certain aspects of its origin culture. M.N Srinivas distinguishes four hierarchy of Hinduism – the Pan Indian Hinduism, Peninsular Hinduism, Regional Hinduism and Local Hinduism. Manipuri Hinduism can be brought under Regional Hinduism

³⁹ Sanamahism refers to the particular religious belief and practices which the Meiteis had before they adopted Hinduism. They have a vast knowledge of their pre-Hindu period called by few sections of the Meiteis as Meitei Laining Lichat or Sanamahism and also they store such knowledge in the scripture called Puyas.

⁴⁰ Meiteization process is a strong resistance to the process of Hinduisation which has increased especially post- independent Manipur. Reformist and Revivalist movements among Meiteis are working under the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha and the Meitei Marup respectively

identity, Hinduism is the one that shows the distinct and unique Meitei identity which is different from the mainstream Hindus and from the surrounding hill tribes.

The Sanamanhi movement started by Maorem Phullo from Cachar had a semi-revivalistic character.⁴¹ He founded the Apokpa Marup in 1930 which tried to revive the Sanamahi religion and its gods like Pakhangba, Sanamahi Leimaren and emphasized their relevance for the regeneration of the community to recover puya (the ancient Meitei manuscripts) and popularize the Meitei script. Its protagonists considered the connection of Mahabharata with Meiteis as a myth and so dismissed Meiteis' having an Aryan origin. There was a tremendous change in the society since 1930 like new political consciousness and its growth and intense movement towards De-Hinduisation process. Such changes was mainly due to a rapid rise of the power of Brahmasabha, later the abolition of native statehood and assimilation with Indian state, spread of education, closer contact with outside world and more frequently with Indian society and the raise of the tendency of autonomy among the hill tribes. The feeling of oneness among the Meiteis was further strengthened by re-installation of traditional deities in the original abode located in the hills and increase numbers of deities and temple in the urban areas; dramatic rise to the surface of some traditional Meitei authorities like Maibas and Maibis and new religious functionary known as Meitei Bamol or Sonmayai; because of the forces working in this movement like 'Meitei Marop', 'Sanamahi Thougai Kanglup', 'Meitei National Front', 'Hericoun', 'Sajal'. The revival of the Meitei religion, script and their claims for various places as legitimacy space of power has lots of political implication which is evident in the context of demand for the recognition of Kangla as the heritage of the people, reappearance of king in the Lai-Haraoba and Mera-Hou-Chongba festivals, celebration of Manipur Independence Day, etc.

The ongoing Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis has its impacts not only to the concern section of the movement but also on the relationships of various ethnic communities in the state. There is more consciousness of identities among different

⁴¹ Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Subnationalism in North-East India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2002) p.121

groups which led to the formation of socio-religious organizations in the state to mobilize people to promote their identities. It is mainly argued that the present Sanamahi movement is part of the Meiteis effort to bring a broader Manipuri identity in the state rather just to regenerate the cultural identity of the Meitei. But such broader Manipuri identity has a problem especially when they choose festivals like Lai-Haraoba and Mera-Hou-Chongba as their effort to bring the revival and persistence of the inter-ethnic harmony in the region on one hand and revive and promote Meitei script on the other hand.

Lai-Haraoba seems to be limited within the relationship between the Meitei and only one tribes among 33 tribes in the state i.e. Tangkhul. In the festival of Mera-Hou-Chongba, there are more non-ritual parts like exchanging of various gifts among the hill and valley peoples and also a particular ritual where the tribal priests perform asset of ritual. Such rituals may symbolize cultural accommodation and tolerance of other culture and identity but in reality and day today life, the situation is different. Also it may not only provide a solution to the present ethnic problem but may create lots of contradiction where there is assertion of various ethnic identities in the state. While trying to assert a broader Manipuri identity, it promotes only the common identity of the Meiteis and hill tribes and fails to integrate the identities of communities like Muslims who has been living in Manipur more than three-four centuries. Concerning the Muslim community and their responses to the Sanamahi movement, the degree is lesser as ritually no significance is attributed to the community.

Like any other place in the world, language plays an important role in the state and also for establishing identities and to draw a social line to differentiate them from other groups. The demands for the recognition of Meitei script may indicates the emancipating idea of the Meiteis from the domination of Hindi speaking community but it also reflects the hegemonic politics of Meiteis who are majority in the state (as there should be equal concern for the languages or dialects of the small groups of the hill tribes). This creates a sense of threat to the interest or alienation of the small community. With the growth of middle class, the situation was different as anti-Meitei feeling developed more strongly

and thus became an important cause of tension between Meiteis and tribal groups like Naga and Kuki. Such promotion of linguistic identity contradicts to their ultimate goal for the establishment of a broader Manipuri identity.

It is true to some extent what the leaders of the movement are saying about their effort for revival of the pre-Hindu identity or Meitei identity is more relevant in the present context as the intensity is greater than before. Rather just concentrating to removal of Brahminical domination in the socio-cultural and religious identity of the Meiteis, the movement has changed its goals to the demand for the restoration of pre-merger political status of Manipur. Though the members of the Sanamahi religious groups do not pronounce such objective directly, many radical groups including the armed groups frequently pronounced such ideology of the Meitei identity movement and the ideology influenced for the emergence of some radical groups also. Groups like Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and Peoples Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) adopted the indigenous name of Manipur, Kangleipak in their organizational names. These groups believe that the distinct Manipuri identity could be preserved in the sovereign state of Manipur only and so their main objective is to restore the lost independence and sovereign of the state.

Madhu Kishwar argues that unlike most parts of the world where the majority insisted on their own 'superiority' and 'otherness' of the minority, in India the situation is different, as the majority community insists that the minorities are not different (as they are converts from various sects in overwhelming number of the majority) from them.⁴² Pradip Phanjoubam too gave his argument in similar line in the context of Manipur. According to him, lack of inclusiveness of the Manipuri identity is the biggest problems in bridging the many fissures in the Manipur society as the Manipuri identity today has come to be almost synonymous with the Meitei identity but in reality the former is not usurped by the Meitei identity alone.⁴³ It is argued that the Meiteis use the term 'Meitei-

⁴² Madhu Kishwar, "Politics of Majoritarianism vs Minoritarianism," in Gurpreet Mahajan and D.L.Sheth (eds.) *Minority Identities and the Nation-State* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999) p.151.

⁴³ Pradip Phanjoubam, "Manipur: Fractured Land," *IIC Quarterly – Where the Sun Rises When Shadows Fall* (Monsoon-Winter 2005) pp.281-83

Pangal' for Muslims in the state to show the mixed-heritage of the Muslim in their early period. In the process, they have been indigenized and accultured to Meitei culture and therefore, the term is used to absorb them in the broader sense. With more religious consciousness due to Islamic Revivalism, Muslims fear the assimilative tendency of the Meiteis and so there has been stress on the separate identity of the Muslim community. Their demands have not only been equal rights but recognition of their separate identity and concessions or special rights based on that separateness such as reservations.⁴⁴

A very peculiar feature of the majority community i.e. Meitei in the case of Manipur is the development of the fears character of minorities (especially among the educated class) despite being a preponderant majority in the state. There had been spread of the view that outsiders were going to reduce the indigenous Meiteis into a minority in their own land. According to Shakil Ahmed, Meitei consolidation is on the similar lines with Hindutva consolidation: Meitei – Meiteilon – Meitrabak (Meitei – Meitei Language – Meitei Land) which naturally repulsed others who are not Meiteis.⁴⁵ The hatred for minorities especially Muslims betrayed itself in the form of a communal riot on May 3, 1993.

Islamization:

S.C Misra suggests that it was wrong to conceptualize the process of religious change in Indian Muslim society simply in terms of Islamization. According to him, two processes i.e. indigenization and Islamization had been operating throughout the Medieval period.⁴⁶ The two processes pull themselves in different directions and so modifications in the existing socio-cultural structure mean different things to each process. Islamization is more of advance of religion as the main, if not the only, social and cultural value and means of preserving one's identity.⁴⁷ Pratap C.Aggarwal has

⁴⁴ Madhu Kishwar, (1999) *op.cit.*, n.56, pp.151-52

⁴⁵ Shakil Ahmed, *Manipur – A Muslim Perspective*. Source: <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2004/01-15Mar04-Print-Edition/0103200480.htm>

⁴⁶ Satish C.Misra, *Indigenisation and Islamization in Indian History*, Paper presented at the ICSSR Colloquium on Problems of Muslims in India held at Hyderabad, November 5-8, 1973

⁴⁷ Boris Klyuev, *op.cit.*, p.124

documented Islamization process among the Meos of Rajasthan and Haryana.⁴⁸ Because of Islamization process, the Meos changed their names to Muslim ones and they purified their religious practices and rituals during the period leading up to and following the partition of India and Pakistan. In other words, Meos moved from a state of complete integration to a state which is no longer integrated at least in the religious sphere.

Causes of Islamization

Here it is important to ask why Muslims sought to differentiate themselves ethnically through the process of Islamization. Mattison Mines while discussing Islamization and Muslim ethnicity in south India, raise three questions which are important in this context.⁴⁹ Whether dominant religion's tolerance and lack of discrimination allows Muslims the freedom of a strong religious identity through Islamization or Islamization is a reaction to dominant religion's hostility. Another question is whether the process provides political or economic advantages to Muslims. Because of the hospitable and unorthodox attitude of the Maharajas and the subjects of Manipur, Muslims were not forced to convert to the faith of the early Manipur rather treat them fairly and give them space for their faith to flourish. One of the most important examples is the establishment of a new institution in 1606 A.D. that is the appointment of a Qazi who by application of Muhammadan Law was to adjudicate cases arising among the Muslims. As it is a kind of rule, going back to the days of the Prophet to have a Qazi in a Muslim settled place with a sizable number of their population to settle disputes among the Muslims which arose from time to time. For a small minority group like Muslims in Manipur, the appointment was significant. The Qazi acted and did his best to uplift the moral standard of the people and to preserve norms and traditions of Islam which is very important here. Maharaj Chandrakriti exempted the Muslims from bowing down and allowed them to perform only 'salam' although it was a custom for all subjects to pay their respects to the Maharaja by bowing down before him. Maharaja conferred the

⁴⁸ Pratap C. Aggarwal, "A Muslim Sub-caste of North India: Problems of Cultural Integration," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1966, pp.159-67

⁴⁹ See Mattison Mines, "Islamization and Muslim Ethnicity in South India," in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1981)

title of 'Nawab' on the leader of the Muslim community and also a special panchayat court was established at Lilong for the trial of cases between the Muslims and the Meiteis.

To justify the second question in the case of Manipur, two important events need to be looked at. First one is the Burmese's occupation of Manipur commonly known as in the history of Manipur as 'Chahi Taret Khuntakpa' or Seven Years of Devastation (1819-1826). A change in the socio-economic life of the Manipuri people was the greatest change during and after the Devastation period. During this period, they had a new interaction with people from Cachar, Tripura and West Bengal and whatever they learned (new cultures) from them, they introduced the same in Manipur when they went back. It is said that Baghyachandra introduced Ras Lila after he came back to Manipur and King Gambhir Singh introduced Ratha Jatra and Gostha Asthmi. There were new changes especially of the reconsolidation of Hinduism after Manipur was liberated from the Burmese. One of the most important examples is during the reign of Chandrakriti Singh, who brought many new values of orthodoxy from outside Manipur. Also because of the coming of new Brahmins in Manipur after the Devastation, there was desire among Meiteis to become better Hindu and so they adopted few basic belief, practice of vegetarianism, purity and pollution.

Such changes increased religious orthodoxy and hostility among the Meiteis and other communities. Muslims who were considered as part of the integral Manipuri identity were started treating by the orthodox Meiteis as polluted community. The social interaction among the Meiteis and the Muslims was negligible as far as the marriage alliance and other socio-religious life were concerned and still it continues. Not only among the Meiteis, but among the Muslims also, a new orthodoxy appeared in the practice of religion after the Seven Years of Devastation. Because of their long stay outside Manipur, they brought many changes not only in their religion but also in other cultural practices. One important change was the establishment of various mosques in Manipur. Thus, both Meitei and Muslim communities started identifying themselves

more strongly in an orthodox manner which created hostility. It brought a new identity formation among the Meitei and Muslim of Manipur.

The other event is the ongoing Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis which initially started as a purely socio-religious movement to remove the Brahminical domination. But this movement soon assumes various political goals of the Meiteis, like any other ethnic group to define a particular identity and history. The problem with the movement is its aim of bringing a broader Manipuri identity which is viewed by other communities as Meiteis' intention to identify the whole state (Manipur) by using Manipuri with Meitei. This implants in the minds of different communities a sense of insecurity which resulted in the development of a fear psychosis of being dominated and subjugated by the Meiteis, the majority community in the state. There is formation of different socio-religious organizations to promote culture and identity of their particular communities. Such consciousness and quest for identity among different communities now has grown and sharpened over the years.

Because of the efforts of the educated elites and political leaders of the Muslim community, there have been demands for reservations and safeguards for the Muslims. Syed Ahmed argues that such efforts resulted in coming up of many organizations in Manipur both governmental and non-governmental affiliated to national bodies, linking up the community with their brethren outside which facilitated in their course of ongoing community consciousness and identity formation.⁵⁰ But it is less clear whether Islamization process provides any political or economic advantage to Manipuri Muslims.

Islamization Process and the New Muslim Identity in Manipur

Late 19th and early part of 20th century is the period considered important for Muslims throughout the world because it witnessed significant changes in their religious

⁵⁰ Syed Ahmed, *Muslims in Manipur: Quest for an Identity*, Seminar paper on Land Problems and Ethnic Crisis in North-East India, July 27-28, 2005 (Unpublished) organized by Maulana Kalam Azad Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata at Manipur University

outlook. The insistence was on a purer form of faith through purificatory purging of non-Islamic accretions and excrescences that was hitherto prevalent among the Muslim folks.⁵¹ The outcome of such changes were the coming up of various movements like Wahhabi, Deoband, Ahl-i-Hadis in the 19th century and Tabliqi Jamaat, Jamaat-i-Islami in the 20th century. Northeast India was not exempted by these new reformist movements. New Muslim reforming sects like Ahl-i-Hadith, Wahhabis and Faraizis made their appearance in the region by the 19th century.⁵² These movements' emphasized two things—firstly, to purify the practice which they leveled as bidat (innovation). It is to remove the non-Islamic accretions which corrupt Islam. Secondly, they argued for absolute monotheism and so advocated the Muslims to return to the original teachings of Islam as incorporated in the Quran and the Hadith.

It was only in the early part of 20th century because of the new awakened forces of Puritanism and revivalism by the religious elites, educated in the madrasas of mainland India that the acculturative and popular syncretistic tradition of the Manipuri Muslims was confronted a challenge and subjected to criticism. For the first time, Muslims in a small number started moving out for religious studies. After the completion of their courses from the Madrassas of Meerut, Rampur, Lahore, Delhi, Dhaka, Cachar, etc the first batch of ulemas from Manipur returned home in the early part of 20th century.⁵³ These ulemas or maulvis started settling down in different part of Muslim dominating areas, preferably at places distant from Imphal mostly in the villages.

First they began with the basic religious principles and testimonials –

- a) Kalima (Faith)
- b) Namaz (five times prayer)
- c) Roza (fasting)
- d) Haz (pilgrimage to Mecca)
- e) Zakat (charity).

⁵¹ Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp.106-07

⁵² Syed Ahmed, *Puritanical Movement among the Muslims in Manipur*, *op.cit.*

⁵³ Syed Ahmed, *Regional Formulation of Islam in Manipur*, Paper presented at the National Seminar on Globalization and the Changing Scenario of Cultural Interaction: Manipur Experience (Unpublished) organized by Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University, March 3-4, 2005

Since Manipuri Muslims know only Manipuri language, they were unable to read Quran and other religious books (copies of which were available only in the Arabic script). To cope up with this problem, maulvis first began to teach languages like Arabic, Urdu in madrassas. They were also concerned with the original teachings of Islam as incorporated in the Quran and the Hadith. They discovered that the Manipuri Muslims had become so integrated and adopted well to Manipuri customs and traditions. Through massaura, waz, nasihat and folk-songs, they travel from village to village to expound the pure precepts of Islam and their basic duties to the Muslims.⁵⁴ They introduced the Islamic dress code, manners and etiquettes, life-style, etc.

Maulvi Abdul Jalil was the leading maulvi of Thoubal Moijing. Although he was not a Manipuri by birth, many Manipuri Muslims are of the opinion that his teaching brought into existence a kind of 'Islamic Revivalism'.⁵⁵ Like Fazlur Rahman during the time of Firoz Shah Tughluq, he too believed in the restriction of the social mobility of the Muslim women especially visiting the market place (as Manipuri Muslim women like other local women always engaged themselves in economic activities and form a mainstay of the economy.⁵⁶ Muhammad Hafiz Ali was responsible for introducing a traditional form of dress 'lungi' among Muslim males.⁵⁷ Moinuddin maulvi was more with making compulsory the recitation of the 'Kalima' before Nikah, for prohibiting Muslim women from bathing in rivers and performing the obligatory 'Namaz'.⁵⁸ The most significant change was the adoption of the burkha by the ladies of Mayang Imphal, Irong and Thoubal. Earlier such practice was confined mostly to the wives of maulvis who had studied outside and returned to the state. Also there was change in the pattern of dress – instead of a short blouse, a slighter longer kurta upto the knees to cover the upper half of their bodies were worn over the phanek (the traditional dress of the Meitei

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Mahmoodah Khaanam, *The System of Education Prevalent among the Muslims of Manipur* (Unpublished M.Phil Dessertation), Manipur University, Imphal, 1990, p.43

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.45

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.46

women). Muslim men adopted the kurta-paizama as worn by other co-religionists in the rest of the country.

Role of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama and Tabaligh Movement

A network of both governmental and non-governmental organizations affiliated to national institutional bodies came up in Manipur to meet the religious and socio-cultural needs of the Muslims in the state. Jamiat-ul-Ulama and Tabalighi-Jamaat are two such organizations which came up in the state in 1960s. Both were the two most important Islamic movements of South Asian sub-continent in 20th century representing two fundamentally different approaches to Islamic Revivalism and therefore, they enjoy enormous support in certain important sectors and reached far beyond.⁵⁹

A branch of the All India Jamiat-ul-Ulama was instituted in Manipur in 1961. The Jamiat works for the propagation of Islam and its values; to secure and safeguard the religio-cultural, educational, and civil rights of the Muslims; to promote communal harmony in the state, etc.⁶⁰ They took the initiative of establishing madrassas and so under their assistance and guidance, many madrassas are instituted in various Muslim dominated areas for higher religious studies. They also serve as the board for the madrassa and every madrassa has to take consent and authorization from them.

After the establishment of first madrassa at Lilong in 1907, there has been phenomenal growth of madrassas in the state. Madrassa Imdadul Islam was founded in 1965 in Thoubal District. Azizia Madrassa (residential madrassa for girls) was established at Khumidok in 1978-79. Darul-Uloom was established at Lilong in 1980 on the line of the Darul-Uloom of Deoband as one of the biggest madrassas in Manipur. Madrassa has constituted a body of Ulemas called Dar-al-Ifta to issue registered fatwas

⁵⁹ Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islam and the Tablighi Jamaat," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.) *Fundamentalism Observed* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 458-59

⁶⁰ Syed Ahmed, *Regional Formulation of Islam in Manipur, op.cit.*

(Islamic judgement on the questions of Islamic Law.⁶¹ The curriculum followed in such madrassas called Dars-i-Nizami includes: Quranic recitation, Quranic exegesis, Hadith, jurisprudence, logic, history, Arabic grammar, lexicography, rhetoric and prosody and literature.⁶² Madrassas also organize Jalsa, an important socio-religious gathering of the Muslims. In Jalsa, Muslims outside the state are mostly invited which ultimately helps in expressing community solidarity and consciousness.

Jamiat-ul-Ulema also introduced Islamic and Muslim dress code, manners and etiquettes, life-style, arts and aesthetics, etc. Like the mainland Indian Muslims, outfits such as pyjama-kurta, kisti cap, zuba worn especially by Hajis and Tablighis etc and tradition of keeping bread are introduced among Muslim males. Among the Muslim women, using of veils (burqa) is further enjoined, confining its use only to wives of mauluvis. Many schools and colleges managed by Muslims usually have veils and salwar-kameez as a part of the dress code for the girl students. Salwar-kameez is now more preferred than phanek especially to wear in religious gatherings.

Use of Islamic etiquettes and other vocabularies in Arabic, Urdu and Persian were increased more than before in the day-to-day conversation. For instance, phrases and words like aslamu-alaikum (may God bless you), walekum salam (may you be blessed), insallah (God-willing), khuda hafiz (good-bye), khuda (creator), hajrat (respected), subhanallah (exclamation), quam (community), to mention a few were more frequently used instead of their local terms.⁶³ Most of the newly constructed buildings especially masjids and madrassas have Islamic architectural designs like minarets, domes, arcades, crescent moon and star, floral designs and calligraphy of Quranic verses.⁶⁴

Publication of literatures on Islam and its basic tenets, obligations, the laws of the Shariat, biography of Prophets and prominent stories from Islamic history by the Muslim religious scholars in the vernacular language (Manipuri) is one of the important parts of

⁶¹ Syed Ahmed, *Muslims in Manipur, op.cit.*

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

Islamic movement in Manipur. It is mostly done to bring mass awareness of the faith and easy access to those who could not follow the works on Islamic traditions written in other languages by translating in vernacular language. Some of the prominent publications are Ammanullah's Punshiratki Pambai (1924), Kazi Mujibur Rahman Rahi's Hingnabagi Mannal (1978), Muhammad Maneruddin's Jannatki Leiteng (1973), Haji Helaluddin's Punsigi Pambei (1976), Abdul Rahman's Yusuf Julekha (1986), Kayamuddin Pukhrimayum's Alibabagi Wari (1990), Muhammad Abdul Rahman's Muharram Amasung Karbalagi Lal (1992).⁶⁵

Another important medium used for preaching and propagating Islam is the folk songs which are in two forms – Marifat and Jang-nama. These songs are mainly composed by ulemas and learned scholars to glorify God. It is also orally transmitted through generations. It was a bold step as it reduced the religious truth (enshrined in Arabic and Persian) to a 'profane' and earthly local language.⁶⁶ The language used in composing the songs is simple Manipuri with tunes of gazals, qasidas and masnawis set in harmony with the rural atmosphere of Manipur by employing indigenous themes and imagery.⁶⁷

The Tablighi movement was started by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas in 1920s in Northern India mainly to purify the borderline muslims from their Hindu accretions, to make aware of their beliefs and rituals and not to become an easy prey to the Hindu missionaries (their efforts of Shuddhi and Sangathan). But the aim was further broaden later and became to create a sense of community solidarity and religiosity by exhorting their followers to imbibe the letter and spirit of the Quran and the Hadith, to follow the standards of an ideal life set by the Prophet and his companions and work for the realization of an Islamic ideal.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Syed Ahmed, *Regional Formulation of Islam in Manipur, op.cit.*

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ For details, see Moulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Tabligh Movement*, New Delhi, 1986

According to Maulan Muhammad Illiyas

Knowledge can lead to success only when it is put into practice. Islam is not mere treasure – house of knowledge and wisdom. It is, in fact, a complete code of practical life and adherence to that code is a pre-requisite for success in their life and in the life hereafter. It is therefore, but imperative that some people must take upon themselves the responsibility of enforcing the Islamic practices for the good of mankind. This task has been entrusted to the whole Muslim community.⁶⁹

The ulemas, learned scholars and students who were associated with Deoband Madrassa, took the lead and helped the movement to spread to other parts of the country and outside the country too. The movement took its root in Manipur from the 1960s but became popular from 1980s contributing to the process of the Islamic resurgence and denigration of the un-Islamic elements adopted by Manipuri Muslims from Manipuri culture. The Jamaatis travel from place to place preaching these ideals to their brethren and held religious conference from time to time. They believe in personal contacts and active participation in da'wa work. They isolate individuals from families, occupational and geographical environment for a period of time, form them into a micro community or a group and organize a system or religious learning and other devotional activities.⁷⁰ Also listening to each other's testimonies of faith and religious reawakening is a spiritually and socially rewarding experience, ultimately transforming their personalities and molding their characters in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam.⁷¹ There were frequent contacts, traveling together to far-off places from village to village and also outside the state for missionary purposes. In this way, the movement has broadened and intensified over the years.

The emphasis of the Tablighi movement is more on Muslims universal brotherhood which helps them in looking beyond the confines of area of the state. There is more identification and looking up to their brethren outside and moved by their sufferings. Ultimately such Islamic consciousness helped the Manipuri Muslims to achieve the double objective – internally, of social integration of the Muslim community, and

⁶⁹ Quoted in Ziya-ul Hasan Faruqi, "The Tablighi Movement," in S.T.Lokhandwalla (ed.) *India and Contemporary Islam: Proceedings of a Seminar* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1971)

⁷⁰ Mumtaz Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p.515

⁷¹ Ibid

externally, greater differentiation of the Muslim community from the non-Muslim.⁷² When we use the phrase 'Muslims in Manipur,' it is necessary to see two different implications especially whether the connotation is placed on the word 'Muslims' or 'Manipur'.⁷³ If accent is placed on 'Muslims' the concern is with the larger Muslim population (or umma), in relation to their co-religionists elsewhere. If the accent is placed on 'Manipur', we are talking of Muslims in Manipur in relation to other communities in Manipur.

It is important to note the fact that Islam fostered a sense of unity among its believers across the world with its concept of the umma (community of the faith). Islam is a faith which always seeks to create a community. There are certain duties which are clearly communal in nature and can be performed only by communities and not by individuals.⁷⁴ There are functions of the community which can only be discharged through a temporary or a permanent organization like daily five times prayers, burial of the dead, looking after the poor, pilgrimage to Mecca, etc.

On the other hand, the religion and religious traditions are also undergoing elaborate extensions with large sums of money in the form of offerings and donations, phenomenal growth of the incomes of places of worship and shrines not because of any deep-seated belief in religion rather from mundane existential considerations.⁷⁵ There is more awareness that one must become a good Muslim, not limiting to a Muslim only. And with the growth of the Tablighi movement, this aim of becoming a good Muslim has been quite successful. Thus the spread of Islam has assumed a qualitative rather than quantitative dimension.⁷⁶ But there is increased transformation of religion at the individual-personal level into a collective asset as the latter has larger social or religious community with a viable existence of its own and so the former level is slowly losing

⁷² Syed Ahmed, *Puritanical Movement among the Muslims in Manipur*, *op.cit.*

⁷³ Imtiaz Ahmed "Introduction," in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983) p.xxxvii-viii

⁷⁴ Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent: A brief historical analysis* (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1985)

⁷⁵ Imtiaz Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.176

⁷⁶ A.R.Saiyed, et.al (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.89

ground.⁷⁷ From this point we can argue that there is quantitative dimension of the spread of Islam even today though qualitative one is quite new to many non-Islamic states.

It is important here to put forward the question as to whether it is Islamization which is leading to the formation of Muslim identity in Manipur or it is other way round. Muslims found it necessary to create a new group sense through Islamization in order to establish and maintain their religious identity. The Islamization process reflects their wider identity base as part of the greater Indian Muslims community than just seeking identity as Manipuri Muslims.⁷⁸ They felt a dichotomy between the 'Manipuri' and 'Muslim' identities as they slowly and gradually began to look up to their co-religionist in mainland India and began to feel more comfortable identifying themselves with them.⁷⁹

Challenges before Muslims in their search for New Identity

Islamization is also limited by several factors. One important factor is that the concern for establishing a Muslim identity is mainly confined to educated and middle class Muslims who are having frequent contacts with the dominant culture. Muslim identity is more pronounced among young educated people who have more contacts with Meiteis than among the older population living in a relatively closed and strong Manipuri culture. Little concern is paid to establish a Muslim identity as most are concerned about establishing their personal status and prestige. Another factor is the relevance of accepting the fact that Islamization is not the only process of social change taking place among Muslim communities in India rather it has to compete with processes like modernization and westernization, which owe themselves to wider social forces.⁸⁰

According to third factor, instead of promoting strict adherence to elements of the Sharia, Islamization has allowed the different Muslim communities in India either

⁷⁷ Imtiaz Ahmed, *op.cit.*, p.176

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.86

⁷⁹ Syed Ahmed, *Muslims in Manipur, op.cit.*

⁸⁰ See Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Family and Marriage among Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1976) p.xxxi

legitimate local customs and practices or to reconcile them with the Sharia so that they have a truly Islamic image of themselves and also continue to remain an integral part of the cultural complex within which they are embedded.⁸¹ School of thought led by Imtiaz Ahmed, Mushirul Hasan, and others are of this opinion and so they believe that syncretic and Islamic elements co-exist as complementary and integral parts of single common religious system.⁸² Such arguments give relevance to the term 'Pangal' which according to Shakil Ahmed are a naturalized people of Manipur following Islam and so they are equally at ease being a part and parcel of Manipur and Islamic Ummah at the same time.⁸³ But if we consider the school of thought led by Aziz Ahmad and Clifford Greetz who believes such folk and syncretic elements are temporary anomalies which eventually be eliminated by the Muslim reformers, there is losing of Pangal to Muslim identity which is much broader than the native Pangal identity.

According to Shakil Ahmed, Pangals have a different history and a unique process of ethnic evolution like any other ethnic groups like the Meiteis and the Nagas and so when Meiteis and Nagas, separate ethnic group can follow Hinduism and Christianity respectively, Pangals too can follow Islam.⁸⁴ Christianity might have given Nagas (and other tribes who converted to Christianity) a new way of life but when they realized that it could not help in maintaining a separate entity to them, they returned to the basic premises, values and goals of their traditional culture without which they become ciphers especially with the growth of tribal nationalism.⁸⁵ In the case of Meiteis, they started Sanamahi movement which is an effort to define themselves as a distinct group with their rejection of Hindu culture and returning to their pre-Hinduism Sanamahi faith. But such kind of changes did not take place among Pangals as they do not have a distinct traditional culture to return to unlike Nagas and Meiteis. According to Anthony Smith, there are six bases or foundations of ethnic identity.⁸⁶ Firstly, an ethnic group must have a name in order to be recognized as a distinct community both by its member and outsiders.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.xxxii

⁸² For details, see Francis Robinson, *op.cit.*, pp.44-46

⁸³ Shakil Ahmed, "Socio-Economic survey of Manipuri Muslims," *The Milli Gazette*, March 1-15, 2004

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ Rajat Kanti Das, *op.cit.*, pp.20-21

⁸⁶ Anthony Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p.87

Secondly, a group must believe in or have a myth of common ancestry. Thirdly, the presence of shared historical memories as interpreted and diffused over generations by group members, often verbally among members of a group. Fourthly, a group must have a shared culture generally based on a combination of language, laws, dress, food, customs, institutions, music, crafts and architecture. Fifthly, a group must have a feeling of attachment to a specific territory which one may or may not actually inhabit. Sixthly, the people in the ethnic group have to think of themselves as constituting a group to form an ethnic community that is they must have a sense of solidarity or a sense of their common ethnicity. The conflict between Meitei and Naga or Kuki community is a conflict between groups which share a broad range of common markers: each community has its own religion, language, history and culture but Pangals' existence as a separate community in contrast, is determined by only one criterion that is religion (Islam). It is because of the lack of such distinct traditional culture that Pangals are never identified as separate ethnic group rather they are either identified as Meitei-Pangals (included in 'Meitei' in the broader sense) or Muslims. Therefore, they are turning to their religion and are more involved in the Islamization process than before if not satisfactory to some extent.

CHAPTER III

MUSLIM IDENTITY AND THE STATE

The state has become the central instrument and politics, the principal agent of transformation because of the combination of democratic ideology, economic development and distributive justice.¹ But there are others, for instance, Gunnar Myrdal who described the state as a 'soft state' due to its inability to enforce public policies and its own laws.² To this, Atul Kohli argues that the inability of the state to achieve its declared agenda is due to the logic of democracy which, by enhancing political participation also leads to a multiplication of demands on the state, as the controller of scarce resources.³ Ethnic diversity is the main feature of many developing societies and also a serious problem as it tends to promote conflicts. The ethnic identities come into conflict with the state as not only the underprivileged groups but also the dominant groups on the basis of their ethnic identities began to assert to attain various goals by pressurizing the state. The state on one hand is the main actor in both social and political affairs, nevertheless, it cannot respond adequately to the multifarious claims and demands of the various groups of a fractioned society. Such conflicts and competitions seriously challenged the state. The incapacity of institutions of the state to cope with the multiple pressures of democracy leads to the change in the nature of the state from being an instrument of liberation of the masses to a source of their oppression.⁴

Once independence is achieved, it is difficult to bind together different ethnic groups and so there is an assertion of ethnic identity by different subordinate minorities as they felt neglected and dominated by the dominant groups (with the latter groups as new colonizers replacing the colonial power after their departure). Going hand in hand with this, is the growing assertion on the part of the majority or dominant ethnic

¹ Zoya Hasan, "Introduction: The Political Career of the State in Independent India," in Zoya Hasan (ed.) *Politics and the state in India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002) p.12.

² *Ibid.*, p.13.

³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.22

communities for the promotion, or in some cases the restoration of their political, economic and socio-cultural privileges.

According to Bhambri

...the complex problems of identities has further complicated the situation because political manipulation of identities has encouraged a spirit of competition among multiple identity groups to demand separate territory... The ongoing process of bleeding in the northeast is a direct consequence of the politics of fragmentation of territories by accepting the principle that every identity can be protected by providing a homeland.⁵

Ethnicity has become an important instrument in Manipur unlike other northeast states in demanding economic and political upliftment, which consequently leads to the consolidation of each ethnic group. Because Manipur is composed of different ethnic groups, and again ethnicity has the greatest mobilizing effect in the state.⁶ These ethnic groups have become more conscious of preserving their distinct and separate identity with the passage of time. One such consciousness is among the tribals to foster common ethnic identities which was first encouraged by the British administration in the state under a common administrative system but separated from the administration of the Meiteis in the plain. The Manipur Hill People Regulation of 1947 was solely constituted to administer justice according to the customary laws of the tribals. After the attainment of statehood of Manipur, tribals were brought under the direct administration of Manipur Government which was dissatisfactory to the tribals with the state administration. There were demands for separate identity and administration of the tribal areas. For instance, the tribals are demanding for extension of the Sixth Schedule to the existing six autonomous district councils in the hill districts of the state, and a number of sub-tribes like Inpui, Mate, Chongthou, etc. are demanding for the inclusion of their communities in the Scheduled Tribes List of India. Besides, the Nagas are demanding for the integration of all Nagas inhabiting areas to form Greater Nagaland and the Kukis for their homeland.

⁵ C.P. Bhambri, "Small is not beautiful" in *Hindustan Times*, January 6, 1999.

⁶ P.T. Hitson Jusho, *Politics of Ethnicity in North-East India with special reference to Manipur* (New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2004) p.105.

But what makes the situation more complex is the intensification of various movements owing to the formation of underground outfits by various ethnic groups on one hand, and excessive use of force and violence on the part of the state to deal with the ethnic problems and the ever increasing growth of insurgency on the other hand. The problem with the state is that assertion of any identity other than the national identity was viewed as a threat to the state and in such situation, diversity was merely tolerated by the state but never fully accepted.⁷ Though considerable violence is perpetrated by the agencies of the state, such violence are rather labeled as legitimate force (as it refers to the monopoly enjoyed by the state in the exercise of force). Such views have a different implication in a state like Manipur where violence is an inseparable part of social and political development of the state since independence and now worsened due to insurgency problem.

Upendra Baxi warns that the tendency of the state to settle differences by the use of force may ultimately leads to a situation in which the state may lose its legitimacy.⁸ There is not only institutionalization of violence by the state but state violence also has multiplied simultaneously, the consequences of which is suffered by cutting across all ethnic group, religion, region and class in the state. Besides, the state has successfully shifted its burden of the insurgents to the civil society after lumpenising them thoroughly.⁹

In this light, it is important to focus on the role of the state in relations with the Muslims. The two major issues of communal riots of 1993 and the demands for reservation in relation with the Muslims are emphasized here. This will bring to light the attitude and response of the state towards minority groups like Muslims.

⁷ Rooplekha Borgohain, "Identity and Identity Assertion: Some Issues," in Girin Phukon and N.L.Dutta (eds.) *Politics Identity and Nation Building in North East India* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1997) p.12.

⁸ Upendra Baxi, "Violence, Dissent and Development," in R.W. Meager (ed.) *Law and Social Change: Indo-American Reflections* (Delhi: Indian Law Institute, 1988), pp.72-93.

⁹ Monirul Hussain, "Ethnicity, Communalism and State: Barpeta Massacre," *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 20, 1995, p.1154.

Communal Riot

Bipin Chandra argues that communal riots occur because there is a development of communal ideology in society which is exclusive in its orientation as it is based upon hatred of other religions unlike syncretic nature of the popular religion.¹⁰ For him, the development of such communal ideology reflects the state of affairs when religion moves out of the bounds of the private and enters the realms of the public and also becomes the basis for the organization of political and economic interests along religious lines.¹¹ According to Pramod Kumar, riots have acquired a new dimension of being planned on the basis of communal ideology against a particular target and such new nature of communal rioting is one factor influencing the intensity of rioting.¹² The nature of immigrant communities, mob fury and tension between the ethnic groups for several years are some of the factors that led to the outbreak of communal riots of 1993. Gopal Krishna draws from his investigation of riots and concludes that communal incidents are increasing steadily as a result of the diversity of Indian society.¹³ More the power is devolved to communities because of the democratic process in India, there is more aggravation of communal conflict and thus disrupt the state.¹⁴ The role of the state especially in North-East India is crucial in understanding the communal conflicts because of the influence of socio-economic conditions as the competition among different groups for state-controlled resources are increasing and politization on ethnic identity with the spread of more democratic ideas and intensification of democratic politics. The state's influence on ethnic conflicts may be powerful but indirect, through its action as well as its inaction or its passive and overt activities.¹⁵ Though state always and inevitably takes a stand on the side of one group or another in conflict situations, it is difficult on the part

¹⁰ Quoted in Veena Das (ed.) *Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Pramod Kumar, "Communal violence and Repression," *Mainstream*, Vol.25, September 5, 1987, p.6.

¹³ Gopal Krishna, "Communal Violence in India: A Study of Communal Disturbance in Delhi," *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol.10, 1985, pp.61-74.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Amrita Basu and Atul Kohli (eds.) *Community Conflicts and the State in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.3.

of the state to remain neutral (though the state may choose) when nearly groups in conflict seek the support of the state.¹⁶

Background

The two important components of the valley population are the Meiteis and the Muslim communities who do not inhabit in the hill areas of the state which comprises nine tenth of the total area. The main concern of the majority community is the increasing population of the Muslim which from 1961-1991 has more than doubled itself mainly because of influx from outside, against 70 percent growth of the Meitei population. The Meiteis perceived this immigration as a threat to their economy, culture and identity and such demographic imbalance cause fear of being swamped by non-Meiteis even in one tenth of the area that is in their occupation. The disproportionate growth of the Muslim population especially during the last 30 years (which is mainly due to the influx of Muslims from Cachar) has become a serious matter/concern for the Meiteis. The situation became critical with the role of the fundamentalists and revivalists who work upon this sentiment pervading at all levels of the Meitei society.

One such organization is Poramlen Apunba founded by Shri N.Bisheswar Singh in 1988, who was the former leader of the underground organization called People's Liberation Party (PLA). This organization took up the cause of Meitei Revivalist Movement. The control of sacred spaces (such as pilgrimage centres or temples, mosques and churches) had always been important in the self-definition of a religious community and so their protection continues to be an important symbol around which communal conflicts tend to be organized.¹⁷ Such processes happened when the organization started identifying and claiming certain locations as sacred space for such places were used for worshipping their Gods and performed their rituals by the ancient Meiteis. They involved themselves in activities like reviving the ancient seats of worship and performing rituals. And these places claimed by them had already been used or occupied by the Muslim

¹⁶ Paul Brass (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and the State* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985) p.9.

¹⁷ Veena Das (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp.10-11.

community. Tensions and conflicts are created because of the claim and counter-claim of these places by the two communities at the contesting sites.

According to the revivalists, Leimaching, a small hillock within the Thoubal District is a sacred place for the Meiteis as it is believed to be a place of the abode of the seven Goddesses known as Leima Taret. Near this hillock encroachments have taken place by the Muslim community and they have also used an area nearby as their burial place. This has been objected by the revivalists led by Poramlen Apunba in May 1992 giving the reason that it is a sacred place for the Meiteis which should be preserved and worshipped. And so they not only tried to organize a Lai Haraoba ritual at the said place at Leimaching but also tried to evict the Muslims settled there. A serious tension developed at the location but the situation was controlled, confining to the location of Leimaching and not spreading to other areas.

Following the incident, the Poramlen Apunba started distributing leaflets appealing the Meitei community not to sell their lands to outsiders and punish those who do's by social boycott. It is evident from the reports appearing in the Newspapers that Meiteis were asked not to mix with the Muslims, not to sell land or rent out their residential premises and an ultimatum was served on the Muslims traders and rickshaw-pullers.¹⁸ They also went around Imphal Town warning the Muslims living in the rented houses to leave Manipur otherwise they will face dire consequences. These were silent campaign of hatred against the Muslims that was going on though there was no overt development worth noticing. Such threats towards the Muslim community created some tension and discontent amongst the two communities.

Another incident is that of the Chengeiching where the Poramlen Apunba like the Leimaching incident started claiming this hillock because they considered it to be an abode for the Goddess Imoinu (Goddess of wealth). They laid the foundation stone for a construction of a temple for the Goddess, and later a kacha temple was built temporarily with some buildings around. They also organized pujas and rituals like Lai-Haraoba at

¹⁸ *Kangla Pao*, June 21, 1992.

the site. They insisted that Muslims should be evicted from the place and declared it as a historical monument. These activities of the organization created considerable communal tension though the situation was controlled with the decision to divide the hillock into two halves that is, the western side to the temple of Imoinu and the eastern to the Muslim dwellers.

Sati Khongnang incident, unlike the other two incidents that took place in Thoubal District, was under the Imphal District jurisdiction. The incident soon turned to a communal tension with the Meitei community believing that the mischief of setting fire of sacred tree (Sati Khongnang) as an intention to hurt their feeling. Various types of rumours were subsequently spread to create ill-feelings and tensions between the two communities. Along with these three incidents and the above mentioned anxiety factors of the Meiteis, the disproportionate growth of the Muslim population and the formation of other new organizations along the line of Poramlen Apunba like Ireipak Kanba Lup (I.K.L) and Kangleipak Kanba Lup (K.K.L) or People's Republican Army (an armed wing of the Paoremlen Apunba) led to an easy way to the outbreak of incident of 3 May, 1993 and gave a different outlook.

Riot of 1993

The immediate cause was the incident on 2 May 1993 when three Meitei youths belonging to the People's Republican Army were caught and beaten by the Muslim villagers of Lilong Sambrukhong. They came to the house of Muhammad Adon Mia to recover money which they paid for procuring one small arm for them as Mia failed to procure the arm. On refusal to pay the money, they tried to take away the motor bike belonging to Mia. At this, Mia shouted for help and Muslim villagers hearing the alarm came out and apprehended the three youths and also they were beaten up. The beating of the three youths was seen by the Meitei villagers as a threat from across the Imphal River. John S. Shilshi (SDPO/Imphal) after arriving at the spot explained to the crowd that the three youths were anti-social elements belonging to the P.R.A and they had come

for extortion. But the situation did not become normal after the incident of 2 May, 1993 at Sambrukhong.

On the next day that is 3 May, PRA personnel at large number tried to instigate the Meitei population to retaliate against Muslims by spreading the rumours that some Meitei students were detained and tortured by the Muslims of Lilong earlier that morning who had gone to collect admit cards from Haoreibi College. Rumours were also spread that some Meitei girls were being repeatedly raped by the Muslims. But the trouble was sparked off when a group of PRA assaulted some Muslims indiscriminately who informed other Muslims. Later, there were incidents of burning down of vehicles and houses in various isolated areas by the Meitei youths. According to Shri Thianghlina Pachuau, Superintendent of Police, Thoubal (in his evidence before the Group Clashes Inquiry Commission), the trouble was started by some unknown youths who went on stopping buses coming from Imphal and pulling down Muslim passengers and assaulting them.

Besides Lilong area in Thoubal District, communal violence took place in many other localities and villages of Imphal District on 3 May. According to Shri N.Gourakiswar Singh, O.C., Singjamei P.S, a great number of rickshaw pullers (those who belong to far off villages but used rickshaws from Meitei owners, and one who either stay in rented houses belonging to Meitei families or return to their villages on foot or in any available transport) and also daily wage earners (who were staying with their families in rented houses) were mostly the victims of the group clashes.¹⁹ Many of the killings were taken place where the Muslims were residing either at isolated places or in Meitei populated areas. Mr. Liddle, Director General of Police of Manipur at the time of the incident when examined by the Inquiry Commission on Group Clashes May, 1993 referred in particular to the Canchipur incident where a group of Meiteis set fire a minibus carrying some school children. Other major incidents were the burning alive of the four bus passengers at Kakwa Huidrom Leikai village, nine at Okram Chuthek and

¹⁹ Group Clashes Inquiry Commission's summary and observation on the evidence of Shri N. Goura Kiswar Singh, O.C. Singjamei P.S.

eight near Konjeng Leikai.²⁰ The group clashes started on 3 May continued till 10 May in the three districts of the state. Mr. Liddle in his statement said that altogether 66 dead bodies were recovered on 4th May and 140 people were injured. Though it is difficult to draw a correct figure of dead toll in such communal clashes, the inquiry commission came out with the conclusion that nearly one hundred persons died and a large number of persons were injured. There was also a very considerable destruction of properties during the communal clashes in the affected districts.

The situation remained tense for days and in such condition government took up measures to bring back the situation to normalcy. Curfew order was imposed in all the districts affected by the riot which continued until the disturbances are abated. Police Stations like in Lilong received reinforcement from Manipur Rifles and Police personnel from other Police Stations. Crowds were dispersed wherever assembled by tear gas shells, lathi charges and resort to firings. Some arrests and detentions were also made. Many of the statements given to the Inquiry Commission in their affidavits made no allegation that the police were physically present when any act of violence had taken place. But they alleged the police that they were reluctant to perform their duty and did not show any initiative to control the situation in time if shown the incident would not have been continued. According to Muhammad Ahmad Ali who was injured in the riot, the riot which was started on 3 May continued even amidst the curfew and in witness of the police personal.²¹

Muhammad Muhammuddin Shah, Chairman of All Manipur Muslim Relief and Peace Committee stated in his affidavit to the Inquiry Commission that certain secessionist groups had emerged in the state who turned into an extra-parochial group with the primary objective of driving out the Mayangs (non-Manipuri in Manipuri Language) from Manipur including Pangals that is Muslims. He projects such incident of May 1993 with an idea of ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in the valley of Manipur.

²⁰ Findings of the *Group clashes inquiry commission*, 1993.

²¹ Muhammad Ahmad Ali states in his Affidavit to the Inquiry Commission, 1993.

Inquiry Commission

A one man Commission of Inquiry, headed by Justice D.M.Sen was constituted by the Government of Manipur in 19 June 1993 with the following Terms of Reference:

- To inquire into the causes and circumstances leading to the incidents on 3 May 1993;
- To ascertain the person/parties responsible for the incidents of killing of innocent persons and destruction of properties;
- To find out if there was any deficiency in the arrangements made for handling the situation by the authority concerned and to fix responsibility; and
- To recommend corrective measures and remedies to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future.²²

The Commission inspite of scanty and insufficient evidence came to conclusion in accordance with the Term of Reference. Firstly, the remote cause of the disturbances was the three incidents in May 1992 and thereafter, but the immediate cause of the disturbance was the incident that took place on 2 May 1993 in which three P.R.A activists were assaulted. Secondly, the parties involved in those incidents must be saddled with some responsibility for creating and fostering the climate of antagonism between the two communities. The troubles were started and organized by certain P.R.A activists, whereupon the initiative passed on to anti-social groups, operating in small number. There was no instance of any conflict actually taking place between Meitei crowd and Muslim crowd during the entire disturbances. And so it was not a clash or confrontation between any two violent ethnic groups. Thirdly, the commission expresses its commendation for the efforts made by the administration and especially the police in bringing the situation back to normalcy. Evidence shows that all the killings and acts of violence took place away from any police picket or patrolling party and mostly in Meitei inhabited areas or at isolated places and therefore not in presence of police. The entire police force was engaged in controlling the disturbances by ensuring that the relief camps were properly set up and run, by taking the injured persons to hospitals, escorting the

²² Report of Group Clashes Inquiry Commission, 1993.

stranded persons to safety and dispersing the violent crowds if necessary by resort to firing and enforcing curfew properly.

It is necessary here to highlight two important weaknesses of the various riot inquiry commissions. Firstly, the treatment of communal riots as ordinary crime by individuals and also as a law and order problem. For instance, Pramod Kumar argues that intolerance of people towards other religions, non-alertness of intelligence and police agencies and slackness on the part of the administrative machinery, limiting the incidents immediately prior to the riot, commissions excluding the role of communal ideology (communal politics) and socio-economic factors are seen as the causes for communal riots.²³ According to Engineer, "Communal violence is not rooted in religion but in socio-economic structure and process of development as well as degree of unevenness of resources distribution."²⁴ Bipin Chandra argues that identity formation around religion or communalism was a mere ideology or false consciousness and not a conceptualization of the social reality.²⁵ Communalism has socio-economic and political roots which favoured its emergence and growth and so it has adroit propaganda and clever manipulation of religious identities.²⁶ Secondly, there is no evidence of a pre-planned conspiracy behind any of the riots that have been carefully investigated by various inquiry commissions and all these commissions have exonerated the state enabling it to establish greater control over the life of society and to exclude alternatives.²⁷ Thus there is not a single hint that the state might itself be party to these kinds of riot. Veena Das argues that the state in South Asia is an important party in communal or ethnic conflicts rather than a neutral referee as it has an important historical dimension.²⁸

²³ Pramod Kumar, *op. cit.*, p.6.

²⁴ Quoted in Monirul Hussain, "The Muslim Question in India," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 19, 1989, p.289.

²⁵ Bipin Chandra, "Communalism: Misreading of Social Reality," *Mainstream*, Vol.18, May 31, 1980, p.10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁷ Gopal Krishna, *op. cit.*, pp.61-74.

²⁸ Veena Das *op. cit.*, p.10.

Impact of the Riot

The state of Manipur had no previous history of communal clashes between the Muslims and the Meiteis. Even riots that followed in various parts of India after the demolition of disputed site at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 did not have any impact in the state. This particular riot was the first instance of confrontation between the two communities. In fact, there are instances of active co-operation between the two communities. They combined to fight their common adversaries and even challenged the state when it sought to intervene with their repressive law like Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958. They also opposed carving out of Manipur territory to meet the demands of the NSCN in creating 'Greater Nagaland' and so assert for the state's territorial integrity.

In an analysis of the factors that led to the communal riot of 1993 in a news item in *The Times of India* says:

The outbreak...is only a manifestation of the tension within the state which has nothing to do with inter-religious conflicts. Industrial backwardness, unemployment, sustained but directionless insurgency, historical tensions among various groups and a total lack of understanding of its complex problems by the centre (and the state) have combined to make the tiny state a tinder-box, ready to explode at the slightest provocation.²⁹

It is important to note that, unlike other ethnic groups in the state like Nagas and Kukis who are getting reservation of 31 percent and other State and Central governments beneficiaries under the category of Scheduled Tribes, Muslims in the state are recognized as OBC along with Meiteis giving the same treatment. So there is no possibility of Meiteis' discontent because of more advantageous position of the Muslims. Rather many argued to give some weightage to Muslims in the OBC category while allocating the quota of reservation as they are socially, educationally and economically most backward community. Rapid growth of Muslim population mainly due to influx from outside is considered by Meiteis as one important factor for the economic backwardness of the state and so it is seen as a threat not only to their unique identity and culture but also to their

²⁹ *The Times of India*, May 5, 1993.

economy. If this influx of Muslim immigrants is regarded as a catastrophe by the indigenous people of the valley and as the seeds of communal conflict sprouting from this demographic imbalance, then the communal conflict put a question mark to the concern of the Meiteis both to the distinct identity as 'Pangal' (as different from other Muslim people because of a different history and ethnic evolution) and 'Meitei-Pangal' (as a major components of the population of Meiteis).

It is difficult to explain all these various forms of conflict either in terms of religious animosity or of economic motivation. Though such factors involved, there are other factors too which should not be totally overlooked. One such factor in the context of Manipur is necessary to be discussed here. Unlike other northeast states, Manipur is composed of different ethnic groups and have a history of ethnic tensions and conflicts among these groups. And so in such a state where ethnicity has the greatest mobilizing effect, the majority community that is Meiteis is involved in almost every major ethnic conflict as one party. The other ethnic groups regard that the economic and political powers of the state totally rest in the hands of the Meiteis and so they dominate them completely. The Nagas considered the strained relation between Meiteis and Nagas over Greater Nagaland issue is because of the fear of the Meiteis of losing their dominant power in the state. The relation of the Meiteis with other tribal groups asserting for their distinct identities is also not cordial which certainly affects the normal co-existence between the Meitei and Muslim communities.

According to Pradip Phanjoubam, the divisions have grown far more complex not only between the hills and valley for the faultlines are also there between the hill tribes themselves and between valley communities and so along with two major clashes that is between Nagas and Kukis in the early 1990s and between Kukis and Paites in the late 1990s, riots between the Hindu and Muslim Meiteis in the valley is the third major one in recent times.³⁰ Except for a few cases especially in the beginning day of the riot where some Muslim youths assaulted Meiteis in Muslim dominated areas in response to Meiteis' attack, there were no major retaliation measures taken by the Muslims.

³⁰ Pradip Phanjoubam, "Manipur: Fractured Land," *IIC Quarterly* (Monsoon Winter 2005), p.278.

Shakil Ahmed argues that the term Meitei-Pangal which was in a dormant form, after 1993 incident has always been invoked perhaps to underline the implication that Muslims are 'Meitei' in essence and form.³¹ The mechanism of including them in the OBC list of the state, not as Muslims or Pangals but as Meitei-Pangals along with Meiteis is seen as an attempt to assimilate and destroy their identity by the state, influenced by the dominant group. Again the use of the term 'Meitei-Pangal' was more prominent in the survey called 'Socio-Economic survey of the Meitei-Pangals' conducted by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics and Directorate of MOBC, Manipur. It says that the domain of the survey was not the whole of Muslim population inhabited in Manipur but confine to Meitei-Pangals because all Muslims are not belonging to Meitei-Pangals whose mother tongue is Meitei language (Manipuri) and who have their surnames in the fashion of Meitei's.

Inquiry Commission (1993) finds the Civil Administration and Law enforcing agencies fully engrossed in containing the insurgency and challenges from the secessionist elements prevailing in the state for decades. Further, the law and order situation had become even more complicated and confounded because of indefinite bandhs called by the Manipur Students and the slowly mounting ethnic conflict between different tribes. Considering all these problems and challenges before the state, they never gave much thought that any communal conflict could overwhelm the state and the situation was so inflammable that any spark would be sufficient to ignite on the scale it happened in May 1993.

Along with the state's own peculiar problems which created a climate of mistrust and antagonism all around the state, it is also important not to undermine the fact that Manipur could not be kept insulated from the rest of India. Meitei Revivalism which emerged because of the perceive threat of the Meiteis to their culture, traditions and identity and influx of outsiders cannot be ignored and their consequences must also be properly assessed. Conditions of insurgency have been prevailing in the state for so long

³¹ Shakil Ahmed, *Pangals are not Meitei-Pangals*

Source:http://www.kanglaonline.com/index.php?template=kshow&kid=301&Idoc_session=83b61c978b4b1e92c68382fdofcco5o12

and it has almost become endemic. In addition to that, the communal conflicts have become part of the scenario. The commission feels that the problems in the state are of such complexity, diversity and magnitude that the size of its population alone should not be the deciding factor. From here one can argue that the ongoing Meitei Movement and tribal movement of different groups have successfully pushed Manipuri Muslims back. Muslims were not able to get attention of the state that is pre-occupied with major problems related to other communities.

When Muslims were labeled as 'Meitei-Pangal' in the OBC list by the state in 1994 after the communal riot, they were not able to do anything though they saw it as an attempt to assimilate and destroy their identity. Mohammad Aslam argues that the religious identity has been constantly reinforced on one pretext or the other and one such is communal riots, compelling Indian Muslims at one level to think and act as Muslims and further reinforcing this identity.³² In the case of Manipuri Muslims, a sense of insecurity and unconscious fear psychosis of being subjugated by the majority communities was enforced by the communal clash of 1993 which over the years has led to the growth and sharpening of the quest for identity of the Muslims because of the feeling of exclusiveness and separatism of the Muslim community.³³ Most of the Muslim organizations which voice the grievances of the community came up only after 1993 riot and so over the years there has been a growth of such organizations. In one way it is politicization of the incident by politicians, leaders, elites and pressure groups of the Muslim community to make full use of the incident to emerge Manipur Muslims as a political community.

Reservation of Muslims

Constructivists argue that ethnic or national identity is socially constructed; that is, it is the product of processes which are embedded in human actions and choice rather

³² Mohammad Aslam, "State, Communalism and the Reassertion of Muslim Identity," in Zoya Hasan, et.al (eds.) *The State, political Process and Identity: Reflections on Modern India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989) p.272

³³ Syed Ahmed, *Muslims in Manipur: Quest for an Identity*, Paper Presented at the Seminar on Land Problems and Ethnic Crisis in North-East India (Unpublished) organized by Maulana Kalam Azad Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata on July 27-28, 2005

than biologically given ideas whose meaning is dictated by nature. In the context of South Asia, it is again more important to apply social constructivists view because of the vertical and horizontal differentiations that often exist among ethnic groups in which former refers to the hierarchical rankings given to different cultural makers by a group in asserting its separate identity and latter to the identity distinction that is made by an ethnic group in cases where multiple identities co-exist adjacently.³⁴

For Paul Brass, ethnicity is viewed as a social and political creation of elites, who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves.³⁵ Thus various ethnic groups, especially ethnic elites are forced to compete for resources with each other leading to ethnic identity formation. Rooplekha Borgohain argues that the culture of oppression led by many upheavals, upsurges from diverse quarters resulting in a proliferation of movements based on identity and such movements are mostly led by the emerging elite whose needs and interests were on the rise and who felt more deprived compared to the dominant groups.³⁶ In a multi-cultural society like Manipur it is just not possible for one particular group to remain unaware of the changes that is taking place in other groups with newly articulated forces which began to emerge in their communities.

Manipur Muslim identity which began to emerge with the puritanical movement launched by the religious elites on the cultural and societal aspects did not remain the same when other communities of the composite population of Manipur had not only reached the stage of evolution where an identity began to emerge but also used and exploited it to serve their political, economic and social interests. A group represented by urban Muslim elites and various pressure groups of the community has emerged in Manipur over the years. These groups along with Muslim politicians exploited the collective identity and consciousness to impose a broad frame of religious unity on the

³⁴ Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, "Introduction: Placing Race and Nation," in Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose (eds.) *Constructions on Race, Place and Nation* (London: UCL Press, 1993) pp.1-2

³⁵ Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications, 1991) p.8

³⁶ Rooplekha Borgohain, *op.cit.*, p. 13

community for the ultimate objective of its political mobilization.³⁷ With puritanical movement from the early 20th century is the socio-economic grievance and discontent over the years which together transformed Manipuri Muslims into a 'community' with 'an awareness of a common identity.' The politicization of this 'collective religious identity and consciousnesses has led to the emergence of Manipur Muslims as a 'political community'.³⁸ With the emergence of educated elite and middle class among the Manipuri Muslims there are formation of various organizations and entry into politics putting forward the grievances and demands. Therefore, the phenomenon of Muslim identity if not originated because of the educated elites and middle class of the communities, but a momentum was given to the movement because of them.

The phenomenon of identity has evolved through a specific process of development and can be identified with definite phases of growing social differentiation which is an ongoing process and so the question of identity of a community is not a static question.³⁹ Ultimate consequence of the emergence of Manipuri Muslims as a political community is the coming up of a chain of governmental and non-governmental organizations in Manipur affiliated to national institutional bodies. Manipur Wakf Board in 1988, Manipur Hajj Committee in 2003 and Manipur State Minorities Commission in 2004 were constituted to look into the various socio-cultural and religious needs of the Muslims in the state. Besides these governmental institutions, many bodies which voice the grievances and highlights the socio-economic and political issues concerning the Muslims are instituted by the educated Muslims over the recent years. All Manipur Muslim Student Organisation (AMMSO), All Manipur Muslim Organisations Co-ordinating Committee (AMMOCOC), All Manipur Muslims (Meitei Pangal) Welfare Association (AMPWA), Kangleipak Muslim Chanura Development Organisation (KMCDO), Minority Youths' Development Organisation (MYDO) and United Muslim Organisation (UMO) are some of the prominent ones in the state.

³⁷ Syed Ahmed, *Puritanical Movement Among the Muslims in Manipur: Search for a Religious Identity*, Seminar Paper on Problems of Ethnicity and Identity in Contemporary Manipur, organized by Department of History, M.U. and Centre for Ethnic and Identity Studies, Manipur, 27 October, 2006 (Unpublished).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Manorama Sharma, "Identity: Inherent or evolved?" in Girin Phukon and N.L. Dutta (eds.) *op. cit.*, p.23.

According to Ted Gurr, the process of relative deprivation can lead to ethnic political movement when ethnic groups receive less (their expectations) than feel they deserve (their expectancies) and revolt may occur in four stages.⁴⁰ First, ethnic groups have to recognize that deprivation in society exists. Second, ethnic groups have to also recognize that their wretched condition is not experienced by all other groups and that some of these other groups enjoy what they lack. Third, ethnic groups have to develop the feeling that the situation of deprivation in which they find themselves is not only inequitable but also unfair. Finally, ethnic groups must recognize that political action could change the situation in their favour. This is the stage for mass political activity and revolt. These four features were reflected in efforts made by the Manipuri Muslims to bring State Government's attention to the grievances and demand for redressal measures of the community through concessions, reservations and safeguards for last few years.

Reservation issue

For D.L.Sheth, reservations are part of a much larger policy package comprising a series of programmes and preference schemes to benefit the weaker sections of the society and these policies derive their legal status and legitimacy from the Indian Constitution.⁴¹ Among the three sets of policy goals, it is the second goal of the policy to facilitate and promote equal participation with others of all socially disabled and disadvantaged groups by giving preferential treatment in education, in government employment, reservation of seats in parliament, state legislatures and local bodies and through other schemes and measures.⁴² All the preferential measures are extended to all three types of communities who are taking the beneficiaries of the reservation, that is Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), except for the reservations in legislatures which is confined to the two former communities only. The OBC category does not have any centrally identifiable and systematic characteristics such as social segregation or spatial isolation found

⁴⁰ Cited in Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989) pp.47-48.

⁴¹ D.L. Sheth, "Reservations Policy Revisited," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 14, 1987, p.490.

⁴² *Ibid.*

respectively in the case of SCs and STs.⁴³ The matter of reservations for OBCs is rather left to the discretion of the state governments. Since the mid-seventies, the states of north India, Gujarat and Maharashtra have begun to extend the reservations to OBCs. In southern states, reservations for OBCs have existed.

The Association for Promoting Education and Employment of Muslims, demanded the recognition of the Muslim community as a Backward Class and also the consequent extension of reservation to the community in proportion to its population and level of backwardness, both in higher and professional education as well as in public employment.⁴⁴ The association's preference is for a separate quota for Muslims, rather than including them in the existing groups eligible for reservations, so that the Muslim community can enjoy the full benefit of their rightful measure of reservation, free of all apprehensions of any encroachment by other relatively advanced communities if bracketed with them.

The Government of Manipur has been seized of the demand of different OBC communities to look into their complaints regarding under/non representation of some OBC communities in the admission in professional and technical courses as well as appointments in the State Government services. Manipur State Minorities commission which was constituted by an executive order of the State Government, made some important recommendations and suggestions for the welfare of Minorities to the State Government.⁴⁵

Some of the main recommendations:

- The commission recommended the State to take immediate action to implement the Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme effectively. The programme was meant for the welfare of the minorities, introduced by the Central Government in 1983 but was not implemented by the state in letter and spirit.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.492.

⁴⁴ Cited in Laura Dudley Jenkins, *Identity and Identification in India: Defining the disadvantaged* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p.115.

⁴⁵ Manipur State Minorities Commission, Press Release, October 5, 2005.

- The commission recommended setting up of State Minorities Development Finance Corporation as recommendation made by the National Commission for Minorities. The State Government has not set up State Minorities Development Finance Corporation through the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation to extend financial assistance to the Minorities.
- The commission recommended to the State Government to invoke Article 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution. Clause (4) of Article 15 enables the States to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens. So reservation of seats in the educational institutions may be provided for Other Backward Classes (OBC) of citizens. Clause (4) Article 16 enables the States to make reservations in posts or appointment in favour of the backward classes of citizens which in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State. The provision made applicable for reservation of posts in the Government Services for the SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Thus the above two articles are necessary to introduce reservation policy for Muslims of Manipur (categorized as Meitei-Pangal in OBC list) as done in Kerala (10-12% for Muslims), Karnataka (4% for Muslims) and Andhra Pradesh (5% for Muslims).

The State Government constituted the Manipur State Commission for Other Backward Classes for the Backward Classes other than the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the State of Manipur. The Commission was constituted to examine and determine suitable percentages of reservation of seats in educational institutions for admission to Professional and Technical Courses and for reservation of appointments to the posts/services under the State Government for each OBC communities notified by the Government in 1993. The commission also suggested measures for upliftment of socially, economically and educationally backward sections among the OBCs and made recommendations on any other matter relating to other backward classes which may be referred to it by the Government from time to time.

There is an Act called the Manipur Reservation of Vacancies in Posts and Services (for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Act, 1976 which provides reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the state. And so there are 2% and 31% reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively, in the state. Maintaining 50% limit for reservation, the quota available for OBCs is 17%.

The Government of Manipur notified the following communities as 'OBCs' in respect of the State of Manipur (5 September, 1994). They are –

- Meitei/Meetei (including Meitei Brahmin, Meitei/Meetei Sanamahi/Meitei Rajkumar and Non-scheduled castes Lois)
- Meitei-Pangals
- Telis, who have been domiciled in Manipur for 10 years and their descendants
- Badi (Nepali); Damai (Nepali); Gainay (Nepali); Satki (Nepali) and Kami (Nepali) who have been living in Manipur as members of the domiciled community since 9-7-1947 and their descendants.⁴⁶

The commission is of the view that identification of OBCs in these four groups would not mean classification or categorization of the different OBCs into backward and more backward class on the basis of their comparative backwardness. Rather all these backward classes are to be treated as equally backward.

In the interim report, the Commission recommended reservation of different OBC communities in appointments or posts in State Services and also in selection for admission to professional and technical courses as:

1. Meiteis/Meeteis - 14%
2. Meitei-Pangals - 2.50%
3. Telis and Nepalis - 0.50%

The share of the different OBC communities is on the basis of their respective population and slight adjustments that has been made to give adequate representation

⁴⁶ Interim Report of the Manipur State Commission for Other Backward Classes, Manipur, December 2006.

considering the number of Government employees and students in higher and technical education and also as required by peculiar situations.

Muhammad Hussain Choudhury, member of the Commission in a dissent note on the fixation of suitable percentages of Reservations for the different OBC communities of the State emphasizes that it would not be pragmatic to assume the socio-economic and educational status of the four communities are equal because they have been included in the OBC category. Therefore, to treat all the communities equally for the purpose of reservation is not socially justified. One important fact he puts forward is that unreserved seats have remained and shall remain the domain of the Meitei Community as they are more advanced socially, educationally, economically and politically than other communities in Manipur. For the last nine years (up to 2005) not a single student from the Meitei-Pangal and Nepali communities has been able to get selection in any of the Professional and Technical Courses like MBBS and Agriculture except for few in Veterinary and Engineering Courses. Since Meiteis are more advanced than the other three remaining communities belonging to OBC, some weightage should be given to the other OBC communities while allocating the quota of reservation to develop equally. Therefore, for the reservation of the four OBC communities, Hussain Choudhary recommended 12% for Meiteis/Meeteis, 4.5% for Meitei-Pangals, 0.5% for Telis and Nepalis together.

It was the main demands of the organization, Manipur Minority Muslim Development Committee (MMMDC) on behalf of the Muslims of Manipur for the establishment of a separate corporation for the Minority Muslims of the state in the pattern of Manipur Tribal Development Corporation Ltd. and for a separate quota for the Muslims of the State in the field of education and employment, etc. In spite of commitment by the Chief Minister of Manipur (after the discussion with the Chairman of MMMDC on 19 July, 1996) to provide various programmes and schemes to benefit Manipuri Muslims, no further action were taken up. The chairman of MMMDC raised the question as to why the State Government is not serious of establishing a finance corporation for the Minority Muslims when the community is less developed,

educationally and economically. Thus, ultimately MMMDC demanded setting up of Minorities Development and Finance Corporation by legislation and 8 percent proportionate representation of minority Muslims in recruitment to State and Central Service including PSU/Corporation/Board etc and seats in Professional courses like Medical, Technical and Higher Education.

In memorandums submitted to the Chairman of Manipur State Commission for the Backward Classes, All Manipur Muslim Organisation Co-Ordinating Committee (AMMOCOC) and All Manipur Muslims (Meitei Pangal) Welfare Association (AMPWA) viewed the recognition of the Manipuri Muslims as OBC along with Meiteis giving the same treatment without any weightage to Muslim community is an improper treatment. Without making a reservation policy in proportion to their population it is difficult to uplift Manipuri Muslims (the most backward community among the Minority Communities and other backward classes). So the Committees asked the Commission to grant a separate quota of reservation in favour of the Manipuri Muslims in proportion to their population.

In two separate memorandums submitted to the Chief Minister, the All Manipur Muslim Students Organisation (AMMSO) emphasized the worsening condition of the Manipur Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) which according to the Organisation is due to the lack of Quota System and noncompliance of Mandal Commission. It is the demand of the organization since 2002 to reserve 10 percent for Backward and Minority Muslims in all educational institutions and in all the government jobs. With State Government's notification for conducting a Combined Competitive Examination by Manipur Public Service Commission, the organization intensified and urged the state to withhold the exam till their demand for 10 percent reservation policy is not implemented. AMMSO called a 36 hours bandh before the ensuing preliminary examination for MCS, MPS examinations. Muhammad Anwar Hussain, general secretary of AMMSO said, "The bandh is being called as the Manipur Government has failed to hear the grievances of the

minority communities...the agitation is being launched for the sake of future generations of the minority community.”⁴⁷

A Private Member’s Resolution was moved by Opposition MLAs O.Joy and Dr. Nimaichand Luwang. O. Joy said that the failure of the State Government to implement the Central directive to reserve 22 percent of the seats has deprived the rights of the communities who belong to OBC.⁴⁸ They emphasized that there should be 22 percent seats reserved for OBC as there is 33 percent reservation for SCs and STs also (2 percent for SC and 31 percent for ST according to the report of 1971).

The State Government after reviewing the matter relating to the reservation for the OBCs in government jobs and Professional and Technical Courses, decided to fix the percentage that is, 12.5 percent for Meiteis, 4 percent for Meitei-Pangals, 0.50 percent for Telis and Nepalis. Chief Minister of Manipur announced 4 percent reservation for the Muslim Community in government job. Though announcement has been made, the reservation policy is yet to be implemented.

Here it is necessary to see two characteristics and different types of conflicts that affects the formation or transformation of ethnic group identities and the relationships between ethnic groups and the state. One is the competition for government jobs, for places in educational institutions and for representation in government bodies between different ethnic groups. Initially such competition did not have much effect as ethnic groups have very little subjective self-consciousness as separate communities. But ultimately, new forms of ethnic mobilization took place because of internal changes and conflicts among segments within the group and external relations between elites and segments of other ethnic groups. According to Ted Gurr, the idea of relative deprivation also explains about group’s previously acquired privileges who began to perceive a threat to their privileged position as the idea is the realization by a group that it is receiving less

⁴⁷ *Imphal Free Press*, February 4, 2006.

⁴⁸ *The Sangai Express*, July 2, 2005.

than it deserves and that others are receiving more.⁴⁹ One good example is the reservation policy of the state.

The most significant and now a controversial aspect of the policy package is the provision of reservations as their impact is felt adversely and directly by those outside the beneficiary groups and that too in social mobility where the means of mobility are always scarce and competition intense.⁵⁰ The attempt to increase preference of marginalized groups in professional life by giving special consideration to them in educational institutions and public jobs raised several questions. It is the argument of many that the redistribution has not spread evenly throughout the beneficiary groups or different regions. Only a few members of the marginalized groups made it to the economically advantageous and socially prestigious jobs. Effort to supplement such affirmative policies of reserving seats and jobs with an improvement of basic facilities like primary schools, health facilities and training programmes are more emphasized.

According to Bhagat Oinam and D.A.Sadokpam, the problem with the country's reservation policy is that it over-generalizes a theoretical framework to achieve quick practical results and so when applied to northeast India, such general conception becomes a source of ethnic conflict.⁵¹ When economic empowerment is considered as the prime mover, it is an important question that by such empowerment of a group how much it will filter to the lower rank of the underprivileged within the group and also upward mobility of a group, collectively make a little sense as it is the individuals who will move upwards and not the group in the process.⁵² Ultimately it becomes a site of contention for accumulating the maximum benefits among individuals on community and ethnic lines. For example the legal battle between Lois (Scheduled Castes of Manipur) that is Lois of Sekmai, Khurkul, Andro, Leimram, etc. with Lois of Kakching. Another case was when Mandal Commission Report was on its way to be implemented there was a statewide

⁴⁹ Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly, *op. cit.*, p.48.

⁵⁰ Policy package comprises a series of legislations, ameliorative programmes and preferential schemes, designed to benefit the weaker sections of the society. Therefore reservations are part of a much larger policy package. D.L. Sheth, *op. cit.*, p.490-491.

⁵¹ Bhagat Oinam and D.A. Sadokpam, *Problems of generalization*. Available online: <http://www.india-seminar.com/2005/549/549%20b.oinam,%20d.a.sadokpam.htm>

⁵² *Ibid.*

debate to discuss the entry of Meiteis as a backward class. The proposal was supported by majority of the younger generation (mostly middle class) as social downgrading was to avail of job security under the reservation policy which can be seen as serious fallout of the policy.⁵³

Second is the conflict between old religious elites and new secular elites for a redefinition of the central values, purposes of the group and for support within the community and the right to represent the community in relations with outside forces especially with the state. The state may choose to intervene in religious matters and support the religious elites by agreeing to leave either personal law or education in their hands or may promote civil law and secular education to the demands of the new secular elites. The puritanical movement on the cultural and societal aspects launched by the Muslim religious elites represents one group that emerged among the Muslims in Manipur. They are inward looking and so believed that strict adherence to the Quran and Hadith would resolve all the moral and worldly problems. They failed to look into the real problems that they are facing socio-economically and politically. On the other hand, another group represented by educated and well-placed Muslims emerged over the years and they believed in regaining their overall problems with modern education and its values and through government's initiative and intervention. In the case of Manipur, the state observed non-interference with practice and propagation of their faith and so choose the second option of promoting civil law and secular education.

Despite the fact that, state is a conflict ridden, it has failed to respond adequately to the demands of various groups and it began to aggravate the conflict, but people continued to have expectations of the state. Neera Chandhoke argues that past histories (state being symbolized not only as interventionist and developmentalist state, but also a state that was committed to the well-being of its people) shape current expectations of the state's responsibilities and action and so for the institutionalisation of the basic conditions

⁵³ *Ibid.*

of well-being.⁵⁴ Also in an underdeveloped state like Manipur, people largely depend for their livelihood on the government because it is the largest employer in the state. Thus people identify with the state even if they are neglected and deprived.

For a community like Muslims in the Manipur, the role of the state is much more crucial for their upliftment and to remove their most backward status. The Muslims are now demanding quotas/reservations for themselves and such demands are supported by all important Muslim groups. So the dynamics of ethnic conflict are vitalizing an ethnic group, one which has long existed but which is now beginning to see itself in a new light and consequently becoming more politicized. There is no separate political party organized on the basis of ethnicity designed to advance or safeguard Manipuri Muslim interests. And so there is a coalition and integration of the Muslim political leadership into the leading parties in the state. Divided and few Muslim leaders elected from Muslim dominating constituencies do not constitute a strong bargaining force and so not powerful enough to effect a change in the state policy. Unlike North Indian Muslims who give priority to religious or cultural demands (like preservation of Muslim Personal Law, Urdu, etc) along with economic demands which is more demanded to suit the interest of the emerging classes now, Manipuri Muslims are mainly in favour of focusing on socio-economic demands with the underlying aspirations for social and economic equality.

⁵⁴ Neera Chandhoke, "Seeing the State in India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 12, 2005, p.1036-1039.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the emergence of a distinct identity among the Manipuri Muslims by tracing their historical background and socio-cultural life as it has been shaped particularly by Meitei elements. The emergence of ethnic consciousness and competing identities among different ethnic groups in the state has created consciousness within the Manipuri Muslims and sharpened their religious identity. The communal riot of 1993 was a defining event in further setting the agendas and strategies for the Manipuri Muslims.

It will not be out of place to mention here that the application of general theories for the study of peripheral areas like Pangals is not enough. There is not a single theory that can adequately explain the rise of ethnic identity among the Pangals from the earlier period to the recent developments. On the whole, this study is based on a 'syncretic' framework of analysis. The first two chapters are based on the two processes of indigenisation and Islamization where the former is discussed in the first chapter and the latter in the second chapter. The concept of relative deprivation and views of constructivists become handy for explaining the reservation issues which triggered an intensification of Muslim identity in Manipur.

Syncretistic elements were seen in the socio-cultural life of the Manipur Muslims like in the social organizations that is in clan system, in social customs like marriage, in charms and magic etc. Manipuri Muslims were more influenced by traditional Meitei cultures than the Hindu cultures as Hinduism came in Manipur in the early eighteenth century and by that time the process of assimilation of the Meitei cultures was almost completed. Soon Manipuri Muslims got identified with the Meiteis. They are included with the name 'Meitei-Pangal' when use the term Meiteis of Manipur along with seven salais social groups such as Meitei Bamons (Manipuri Brahmins), Manipuri Meiteis (Kshtriyas as well as the followers of pre-Hindu Sanamahi faith) and Lois (war captives and degraded Meiteis). But the fact is that Manipuri Muslims are outside the seven clan

system of Meitei social stratification and so they are outside the pale of socio-religious definition of Meitei which totally negates the inclusion of Manipuri Muslims along with Bamons and Lois. Very use of the term 'Meitei-Pangal' is quite controversial creating a lot of unnecessary problems in the state and confusion outside. The Meiteis use the term that connotes to the mixed-heritage of the Pangal from Meitei women in their earlier period and so 'Meitei-Pangal' means they are indigenized and accultured. But to identify Manipuri Muslims as Meitei-Pangal or to absorb them when we term 'Meitei' in the broader sense is quite unacceptable as acculturation to the Meitei cultures is not limited to Manipuri Muslims only. Like Manipuri Muslims, many tribes of Manipur also speak Meiteilon in accent and living in the valleys in different parts intermingling with the Meiteis (adopting food habit, dress, etc). With Islamic revivalism or Islamization, there were many changes which make Manipuri Muslims redefine and form new identities. Such changes among the Manipuri Muslims due to Islamization process made the use of the term 'Meitei-Pangal' even more irrelevant. It is important here to differentiate Meitei-Pangal from Pangal as latter is not the short form of the former.

Another main argument discussed is whether Manipuri Muslims were conscious of their religion. This question is relevant with more Manipuri Muslims becoming conscious of their identity because of Islamization process as it seeks to dilute the non-Islamic accretions, purify and return to the teachings of Islam. Almost all arguments discussed, emphasize that Manipuri Muslims were conscious of their religion and so there is no creeping of any Meitei elements especially in the field of religion. The liberal and unorthodox attitude of the Kings and the subjects of Manipur of the early seventeenth century as well as the policy of seclusion adopted after the coming of Hinduism in Manipur played an important role. It is also debatable whether there was mass Meitei conversion to Islam. Some argue that there were many converts into the fold of Islam from local people which was not limited to plain communities only. Others are of the view that there was no such incidence of mass conversion to Islam except the Meitei girls married to the early Muslims which was the influence one gets from a majority community because of co-existence over a long period of time. The role Meitei girls married to Muslims to Muslims in bringing Meitei elements resulted in the process of

assimilation of the Manipuri Muslims in local society. Therefore Manipuri Muslims follow only Islam as religion as there was no mass conversion though they are not strict in religious matters like Muslims elsewhere.

Manipuri Muslims, till the end of the 19th century did not necessarily attach subjective importance to their distinctiveness. But as a consequence of the various identity movement and its related conflicts in the state, this group has also transformed into a community based on their religious affiliation. Along with this there are political, ideological and economic pressures and the process of Islamization that are responsible for the rise of separate Muslim identity in Manipur. Regarding the causes of Islamization, three main reasons were put forward. First, dominant religion's tolerance and lack of discrimination has allowed Muslims the freedom of a strong religious identity. Second, Islamization process is a reaction to dominant religion's hostility. Third, the Islamization process has provided political or economic advantages to Muslims. Responses to the first two questions are positive. But answer to the third question is less clear in the context of Manipuri Muslims.

The process of Islamization seeks to place emphasis on two things – firstly, to purify and dilute the non-Islamic accretions which corrupt Islam and secondly, a move towards absolute monotheism and a return to the original teachings of Islam. The new forces of puritanism and revivalism challenged and criticized the acculturative and popular syncretistic tradition of the Manipuri Muslims. Jamait-ul-Ulama and Tablighi-Jamaat are two organizations which came up in Manipur to meet the religious and socio-cultural needs of the Manipuri Muslims. Thus, the activities of these two organizations in the spread of Islam has assumed both qualitative and quantitative dimension and also increased transformation of religion from the individual-personal level to a collective level has become important. From all this, it appears that Islamization is leading to the formation of Muslim identity in Manipur rather other way round.

Another argument put forward in this study is that the state in a conflict ridden society such as Manipur has not responded adequately to the demands of the various

groups and it is often overwhelmed by the demands of the bigger and powerful groups at the expense of the smaller minority communities. Communal riots of 1993 and reservation demands of the Manipuri Muslims are two major issues of analysis in this study. Communal riots of 1993 enforced an unconscious fear among Manipuri Muslims. There was politicization of the incident and Muslim community made full use of the incident to organise themselves as a political community. This process saw the coming together of a number of organizations with the aim to gain state government's attention to the grievances and demands of the community through concessions and reservations in education and employment. They are now demanding quotas for themselves which is supported by all important Muslim groups. For a community like Manipuri Muslims, the role of the state is crucial because they are disadvantaged and poor and therefore need the support of the state. Unlike the Muslims in north India, Manipuri Muslims give primacy to socio-economic demands. This is clearly very different from the situation of Muslims in north India who give greater importance to cultural and religious issues in their politics.

Manipuri Muslims are emerging from their shadows as a neglected community and becoming more ethnically conscious. Through Islamization, they are trying to create a new consciousness that reflects a wider identity base which is part of the greater Indian Muslim community. However, unlike other groups, Manipuri Muslims have had very limited success in their attempt to build a common political identity. One reason is that such concern for identity is mainly confined to educated, middle class Muslims who are having frequent contacts with the dominant culture. Further, they feel that they do not have adequate 'space' for their community in the multi-ethnic state of Manipur. 'Pangals' do not have a distinct traditional culture to return to unlike Nagas and Meiteis in the past. They are not identified as separate ethnic group because of the lack of distinct culture and so they are identified either as Meitei-Pangals or Muslims. Hence, they are taking refuge in a Muslim identity. But now, Pangals' existence as a separate community is determined by only one criterion that is religion (Islam). There is no difference between the nomenclature of Pangals and Manipuri Muslims and so the terms can be

used interchangeably. 'Pangal' is the local name of Manipuri Muslims and therefore, use of the latter term is more appropriate and acceptable.

Known by the name 'Meitei-Pangal' before, various Manipuri Muslims now reject the given name and they are in search of an alternative nomenclature. Muslim leaders and scholars use different names like 'Pangal' with the idea that they have a different history and a unique process of ethnic evolution, and 'Muslim' to identify themselves with mainland Indian Muslims. However, the use of the name 'Meitei-Pangal' is still prevalent and can be seen in the name of prominent Muslim associations like All Manipur Meitei-Pangal (Manipuri Muslim) Welfare Association. Such nomenclatures pose problems as it is not acceptable to all. Therefore it is important for an ethnic group, that they must have a common name in order to be recognized as a distinct community not only by its members but also by others.

The politics of recognition is often an underlying theme in ethno national conflicts. Identities, as Charles Taylor puts it, are 'partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others'¹ The presence of different ethnic groups in the state, instead of creating a fusion, has fragmented the state with competing identities and conflicts. In the trajectory of such ethnic consciousness and competing claims among different communities, the Manipuri Muslims are asserting their own identity and a 'space' for themselves. We can say that this distinct identity unique in itself is being shaped and re-shaped by different elements specific to the place. They are at the same time living side by side with the Meiteis while retaining their Islamic identity.

¹ Charles Taylor, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition,," in Amy. Gutman (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) p.25.

APPENDIX 1

CENSUS OF MANIPUR (RELIGION) SOURCE: THE FIRST REPORT ON RELIGION CENSUS OF INDIA, 2001

Religion	Total Population	Per cent (%)	Literacy rate		Work participation rate
			Male	Female	
Hindus	996.894	46.0	75.3	64.7	44.3
Muslims	190.939	8.8	58.6	41.6	36.8
Christians	737.578	34.0	65.9	58.5	44.2
Buddhists	1.926	0.1	53.3	38.2	47.2
Janis	1.461	0.1	94.5	93.5	37.6
Sikhs	1.653	0.1	88.5	79.8	58.2
Other Religions	235.280	10.9	73.5	63.4	44.3

N. B.: Excluded Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-Divisions of Senapati District of Manipur

Appendix 2

Students Selected List for Professional & Technical Courses in Different Trades								
Sl.No.	Subject	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	Total	
PARA MEDICAL COURSES:		Medical Directorate						
I	B.Pharm.							
	1 Meiteis	2	3	3	4	6	18	
	2 Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	3 Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	4 Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	5 ST	0	1	1	1	2	5	
	6 SC	0	0	0	0	1	1	
		2	4	4	5	9	24	
II	B.Sc. MLT (Degree)							
	7 Meiteis	0	0	0	0	1	1	
	8 Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	9 Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	10 Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	11 ST	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	12 SC	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		0	0	0	0	1	1	
III	D.Pharm.							
	13 Meiteis	1	12	11	10	6	40	
	14 Meitei Pangals	1	1	1	2	3	8	
	15 Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	16 Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	17 ST	1	6	5	5	5	22	
	18 SC	0	1	1	1	1	4	
		3	20	18	18	15	74	
IV	X-Ray Technician							
	19 Meiteis	1	2	3	2	2	10	
	20 Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	21 Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	22 Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	23 ST	1	1	0	1	1	4	
	24 SC	1	0	0	0	0	1	
		3	3	3	3	3	15	
V	Ophthalmic Assistant							
	25 Meiteis	2	2	2	2	1	9	
	26 Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	27 Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0	

	28	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	29	ST	1	1	1	1	1	5
	30	SC	0	0	0	0	0	0
			3	3	3	3	2	14
VI	M.L.T. (D) Course							
	31	Meiteis	0	2	2	2	2	8
	32	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	33	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	34	Nepales	0	1	0	0	0	1
	35	ST	0	0	1	1	0	2
	36	SC	1	0	0	0	0	1
			1	3	3	3	2	12
VII	M.L.T. (C) Course							
	37	Meiteis	0	2	2	2	2	8
	38	Meiteli Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	39	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	40	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	41	ST	0	0	1	0	0	1
	42	SC	0	0	0	0	1	1
			0	2	3	2	3	10
VIII	E.C.G. Technician							
	43	Meiteis	2	2	2	3	2	11
	44	Meitei Pangals	1	0	0	0	0	1
	45	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	46	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	47	ST	0	0	0	0	0	0
	48	SC	0	0	0	0	0	0
			3	2	2	3	2	12
IX	B.Sc. Nursing							
	49	Meiteis	4	3	2	3	2	14
	50	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	51	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	52	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	53	ST	2	2	2	1	1	8
	54	SC	1	1	1	1	1	5
			7	6	5	5	4	27
X	GNM							
	55	Meiteis	0	98	0	0	83	181
	56	Meitei Pangals	0	3	0	0	1	4
	57	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	58	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	59	ST	0	22	0	0	38	60
	60	SC	0	2	0	0	3	5
			0	125	0	0	125	250

XI	ANM							
	61	Meiteis	73	0	0	0	35	108
	62	Meitei Pangals	1	0	0	0	4	5
	63	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	64	Nepales	0	0	0	0	1	1
	65	ST	35	0	0	0	22	57
	66	SC	2	0	0	0	2	4
			111	0	0	0	64	175
XII	MBBS/BDS							
	67	Meiteis	0	41	39	41	42	163
	68	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	69	Telis	0	0	1	0	0	1
	70	Nepales	0	0	0	0	1	1
	71	ST	0	18	18	18	19	73
	72	SC	0	1	1	1	1	4
			0	60	59	60	63	242
XIII	FISHERIES							
				Directorate of Fishries, Manipur				
	73	Meiteis	5	6	3	2	4	20
	74	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	75	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	76	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	77	ST	0	1	5	3	3	12
	78	SC	0	0	0	2	2	4
			5	7	8	7	9	36
XIV	B.E. Course							
				Manipur Institute of Technology				
	79	Meiteis	45	82	12	20	41	200
	80	Meitei Pangals	2	0	6	1	0	9
	81	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	82	Nepales	1	0	1	0	1	3
	83	ST	25	23	5	0	4	57
	84	SC	1	1	0	0	4	6
			74	106	24	21	50	275
XV	Veterinary Course							
				Directorate of Vety. & A.H.Services				
	85	Meiteis	3	2	4	5	5	19
	86	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	1	1
	87	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	88	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	89	ST	1	1	1	3	3	9
	90	SC	1	1	1	0	2	5
			5	4	6	8	11	34
XVI	Vety. F.A.Course							
				Directorate of Vety. & A.H.Services				
	91	Meiteis	32	38	36	27	26	159
	92	Meitei Pangals	0	2	1	2	4	9
	93	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	94	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0

	95	ST	11	3	7	15	15	51
	96	SC	2	2	1	1	0	6
			45	45	45	45	45	225
XVII	Agriuculture Course		Department of Agriculture					
	97	Meiteis	7	7	6	6	7	33
	98	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	1	0	1
	99	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	100	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	101	ST	3	3	2	3	3	14
	102	SC	1	1	1	1	1	5
			11	11	9	11	11	53
XIII	Home Science		Department of Agriculture					
	103	Meiteis	0	0	0	0	1	1
	104	Meitei Pangals	0	0	0	0	0	0
	105	Telis	0	0	0	0	0	0
	106	Nepales	0	0	0	0	0	0
	107	ST	0	0	0	0	1	1
	108	SC	0	0	0	0	2	2
			0	0	0	0	4	4

Community Wise Total Figure in various Professional & Technical Departments							
Sl.No.	Community	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-24	2004-05	Total
1	Meiteis	177	302	127	129	268	1003
2	Meitei Pangals	5	6	8	6	13	38
3	Telis	0	0	1	0	0	1
4	Nepales	1	1	1	0	3	6
5	ST	80	82	49	52	118	381
6	SC	10	10	6	7	21	54
	Total All Communities	273	401	192	194	423	1483

Information prepared by OBC Commission, Govt. of Manipur

APPENDIX – 3

No.F/7/OBC/2002-MOBC/380
GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR
DIRECTORATE OF MINORITIES AND OTHER BACKWARD
CLASSES: MANIPUR

Imphal, the 24th September, 2004

To

The Commissioner (MOBC),
Government of Manipur

Subject – Muslim Quota through recommendation of State Other Backward
Classes (OBC) Commission

Sir,

As discussed, I am to state that it is necessary to initiate for reservation policy for Minority Muslims in Manipur as Meitei Pangals who are enlisted under both Central and State OBC as underprivileged community after a survey to be done through a State OBC Commission. It is also proposed to make 7% reservation for Meitie Pangals and 10% reservation for OBC in the State limiting to 50% reservation Policy.

Further, Advocate General, Manipur may be requested to make available one copy of the judgement order quashing 5% reservation for Muslims by the Hon'ble Andhra Pradesh High Court as stated in the Telegraph in its edition on 22nd September, 2004 copy of which enclosed for kind reference.

I, therefore, request you to kindly take necessary action to constitute a commission for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the State to take up the aforesaid issues relating to the Muslim seat reservation in job and education at an early date.

Encl: As above.

Yours faithfully,

(Kh. Dineshchandra Singh)
Director,
Minorities and Other Backward Classes,
Manipur

Cc:-

1. APS to the Hon'ble Minister of State (Ind. charge)/MOBC for kind information of the Hon'ble Minister.

APPENDIX - 4

**MANIPUR STATE MINORITIES COMMISSION,
MINISTERS' BLOCK, 3RD FLOOR, ROOM NO. 165 SECRETARIAT,
IMPHAL-795001**

D.O. No. 2/14/2005-MSMC
Imphal, the 20th September, 2005

Dear Shri Kamini Kumarji

I write this letter to invite your kind attention to the recommendation made by this Commission to the State Government for reservation of Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) in all categories of government jobs and in Medical, Engineering and professional education. A copy of the recommendation letter along with its enclosures is enclosed herewith for favour of your kind perusal.

As you are well aware, the Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) of Manipur are socially, economically and educationally most backward. The prevailing Socio-economic conditions of Muslims warrant for their upliftment. Among other steps, reservation for them is one of the important steps.

In the orders of the State Govt. declaring the categories of O.B.Cs in Manipur, it appears that the whole population of Manipur is included except the ST/SC. Meitei Pangal is also included in the same order but as a separate category.

I shall be obliged if you would kindly ensure fair share of the Muslims (Meitei-Pangal) in the reservation quota being presently examined and recommended by your esteemed Commission.

With deep regards,
Encl: As above.

Yours Sincerely

Shri H. Kaminikumar Singh
Chairman,
Manipur State OBC
Commission

(A. Halim Chowdhury)
Chairperson
Manipur State Minorities
Commission

Copy to: The Commissioner (MOBC), Manipur.

APPENDIX-5

GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL & ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS (PERSONNEL DIVISION)

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Imphal, the 24th April, 2007

Subject: *Reservation in appointment to Government posts/ services and admission to professional Institutes for OBCs.*

No. 9/1/90 (OBC)/DP: The undersigned is directed to say that the State Government has reviewed the matter relating to the reservation for the OBCs in the State for appointment in Government posts/services etc. as notified under this Government's Office Memorandum of even number dated 27-12-2006.

2. After careful consideration of the matter, and in supersession of this Government's Office Memorandum of even number dated 27-12-2006, it has now been decided by the State Government to fix the percentage of reservation for the OBCs in the State for appointment in Government posts/ services (including Government Societies/ Public Undertakings/ Boards/ Agencies) and also for admission in professional courses in professional Colleges/ Institutes such as Engineering/ Medical/ Polytechnic/ Veterinary & Animal Husbandry/ Agricultural Sciences/ Nursing/ Para Medical etc. as detailed below with immediate effect:-

Sl. No.	Name of Community	Percentage of reservation
1.	Meitei / Meiteis (including Meitei Brahmin, Meitei / Meetei sanamahi, Meitei Rajkumar).	12.5%
2.	Meitei Pangal	4%
3.	Telis who have been domiciled in Manipur for 10 years and their descendents.	0.50%
4.	Badi (Nepali), Damai (Nepali), Gairey (Nepali), Satki (Nepali) and Kami (Nepali) who have been living in Manipur as members of the domiciled community since 09-07-1947 and their descendents.	
TOTAL:		17%

(S. Sunderlal Singh)
Secretary (DP),
Government of Manipur.

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