

Understanding the Politics of Affirmative Action: A Case Study on the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) Movement Within the Meitei-Pangal Community in Manipur

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ABSTRACT

Various ethnic and religious communities call the easternmost region of India home: Manipur. This area has been a "troubled" focal point of the country due to its long history of complicated social and political developments. Both the hill and the valley of Manipur are home to historically marginalised populations, reflecting the region's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural makeup. Therefore, Affirmative Action has also been a focal point in Manipur's political discourse. To secure their rightful place in the regional context of Manipur, the Meitei-Pangal, a sizeable Muslim minority in the area, have been seeking affirmative action under the OBC category since the early 2000s. The community's desire for OBC reservation has achieved some of its goals, but they are still pushing for its full implementation. This article draws attention to the social and political factors that influenced the rise of ethno-centric CSOs in the Meitei-Pangal community in the 1990s by analysing secondary literature along with interviewing community leaders. The OBCs reservation movement of the Meitei Pangal in the 2000s was highlighted by reviewing secondary literature on the subject. The student activism of AMMSO, headed by Md. Hanif Shah, has also brought attention to the OBC reservation struggle for the Meitei-Pangal in the 2000s. The article argues that *strategic existentialism* was the community's way for overcoming the obstacles and challenges they encountered throughout the OBC reservation movement. The article demonstrates how the reduction of civic space and the *populist politics* in Manipur have hindered the operation of CSOs representing minority communities by critically analysing secondary sources pertaining to governance issues in the middle of the 2010s and politics around the issue of indigeneity in Manipur. The article ends by pointing out that the "NGO-ization of resistance" among CSOs representing Meitei-Pangal in Manipur is a result of the hegemony existing in Manipur's CSOs.

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Civil Society Organisations, Hegemony, OBC reservation, Meitei-Pangal, NGO-ization of resistance

INTRODUCTION

Manipur shares a boundary with Nagaland to the north, Assam to the west, and Mizoram to the south. It also shares an international boundary with Myanmar for about 398 Kms. The state of Manipur is home to a diverse group of communities, each with its *distinct yet shared* historical and cultural narratives and the place is often described as a "miniature Indian state" (Oinam, 2003). The demography of the state in the valley region is predominantly inhabited by Meitei¹ encompassing 'Meitei Mussalman' (Pangal)², 'Meitei Brahman' (Bamon), 'Meitei Christian' and the 'indigenous ethnos' (Jilangamba, 2015). Meanwhile, the surrounding hills are home to no fewer than twenty-nine ethnic groups, including the Naga³, the Kuki⁴, the Lushai, the Chin, and their sub ethnicities (Zou, 2018). This complex nature of ethnic relations has also led to a complex myriads of identity

politics, inter-group conflicts, and cycles of violence (Syed, 2023a; Butalia, 2008; Haokip, 2007, etc.) transforming the region into a microcosm of larger national issues regarding ethnicity and governance. This complex and long-standing instability and volatility in the North East, including Manipur, is described as a “Durable disorder” (Baruah, 2007).

Manipur, formerly an independent monarchical state, became part of the Indian union with the signing of the “Merger Agreement” on 21st September 1949 (Noni, 2018). The place is known for its’ history of mass social and political upheavals during its’ monarchical times. The mass movement took the form of questioning rigid societal conditions (imposed by the erstwhile Meitei kingdom) and against the colonial power (Devi, 2024). Significant amongst them were the movements seeking democratization of society against the authoritarian rule of Meitei kingdom, spearheaded by Hijam Irawat (Girani, 2020) and the women’s anti-colonial movement against the British empire (Sana, 2025). Likewise, The Naga, as a community, had been exposed to modern education through Christian missionary activities (Thanmung, 2015). During this time, Naga society is characterized by dualities of discourses; categorizing Naga tribe as an administrative unit, and at the same time, the protracted Naga political struggle in forming an idea of Naga identity and a state as a solution, among many others. These had influenced the emergence of the Naga civil society (Robert & Walling, 2022). The Kuki community was also a part of anti-colonial movement against the British Empire. Efforts to recruit labour for France during the 1st World War sowed seeds for the revolutionary consciousness against colonial exploitation which subsequently prepared them on major ground for an anti-colonial upheaval (Guite, 2019, pp. 68), and these were precursors to the rise of civic space within the community.

When Manipur became part of the Indian Union, the first CSO movement was in the form of the establishment of students’ activism in Manipur, following which the All-Manipur Students’ Union (AMSU) was formed in 1965. AMSU was started as a movement against the creation of artificial famine in Manipur during the early 1960s (Urmila, 2010). Likewise, efforts to address the societal issues arising out of “drug abuse” and “alcoholism” in Manipur had been attempted by the womenfolk with the formation of “Nisha Band”⁵ (Mangang & Chanu, 2025) during the 1970s and 1980s.

Setting the Context: Affirmative Action and the Meitei-Pangals of Manipur

In order to achieve a fair equality of opportunity, Rawls (1999, p. 13) has argued that social and economic inequalities are just if it results in compensating benefit for the least advantaged and vulnerable sections of society. Affirmative Action (AA) refers to a form of positive discrimination undertaken by the State to uplift the weaker and historically marginalised sections. Deshpande (2013a) has defined AA as “a set of antidiscrimination measures intended to provide access to preferred positions in a society for members of groups that would otherwise be excluded or underrepresented. It provides a mechanism to address contemporary exclusion, particularly a mechanism to de-segregate elites” (p. 8). It is tailored exclusively to compensate for the long-standing injustices and structural disadvantages experienced by specific groups.

In every society, certain communities have faced historical deprivation, and in the Indian context, B.R. Ambedkar advocated the policy of reservation as a means to address such inequalities (see, Babar, 2015). Reservation through AA has emerged as a tool to both integrate marginalized groups into the national mainstream and to uphold the constitutional vision of an egalitarian social order (Deshpande, 2013b). Over time, AA has come to be recognized as one of the most effective instruments in uplifting historically marginalised and weaker sections of the society. The push for equality, based on AA, for socially and educationally disadvantaged sections in India, have gained momentum with the formation of “Mandal Commission” in 1979, which had led to systematic identification and categorization of socially and educationally backward classes as “Other Backward Classes” (see, Kumar, 2023). As a result, many communities including the Muslim across India were included within the OBC category and became eligible for reservation benefits. Consequently, the Meitei-Pangal community of Manipur is also classified under the OBC category in 1994 (see, L. K. Singh, 2024) and can claim its share in the national political and educational spheres.

The Meitei and Meitei-Pangal riots in 1993 (see, Kukreti, 2016) had left severe wounds; social, economic, and psychological, amongst the Meitei-Pangal community and this has led to the creation of new subjectivity within

the community (Babu, 2024a). The riot created a new sense of collective awareness and political awakening amongst community. In the post 1993 communal riots, various CSOs like All Manipuri Muslim (Meitei-Pangal) Welfare Association (AMMPWA), All Manipur Muslim (Meitei-Pangal) Women Association (AMMWA), United Muslim Organisation (UMO), and All Manipur Muslim Organisations Co-Ordinating Committee (AMMOCOC), etc. have emerged to demand justice, recognition, and equal opportunities for the Meitei-Pangal community. Beyond the above, a violent insurgent group named as People's United Liberation Front (PULF) had also been emerged within the community (see, *People's United Liberation Front*, n.d.). which aimed to safeguard the interest of the minority Muslim community in Manipur (see, Dangmei & Maharajan, 2022, p. 67). All of the above organisations, through discussions and deliberations, have agreed on the need for an organisation which ought to represent the student sections of the community. Finally, the All-Manipur Muslim Students' Organisation (AMMSO), although formed in 1996, was formalised on 20th February, 2002.

In the initial stage, the OBC quota in Manipur had followed that of the national pattern and the Meitei-Pangal community was categorised together with the dominant Meitei population under the broad OBC category. Questions have been raised as to how the Meitei-Pangals, who have historically been lagging in multiple socio-economic indicators, are expected to compete with a socially and educationally advanced community like the Meitei. The questions of *equality of opportunity* towards *capability* have also been raised by the community.

In the meantime, Md. Hanif Shah emerged as a young student activist within the Meitei-Pangal community. Shah was a visionary figure having strong political awareness and a deeply committed activists in trying to uplift the community. AMMSO, under his leadership, with various other CSOs had a sustained political movement which had finally led to the attainment of separate 4 per cent OBC quota for the Meitei-Pangal community on 27th December 2006. This had provided a broader platform for the community members to engage in mass scale introduction to modern liberal education. Yet, the period after 2010s has shown the vigorous emergence of CSOs within the valley whose objectives mostly revolves around the questions of identifying "indigenous peoples"/ "Yelhou-mee" in Manipur. These CSOs mostly work in tandem with the ruling political class and become a battleground for *hegemony*. Likewise, the primary focus of CSOs within the Meitei-Pangal have also focussed on the questions of indigenous identity of community and the *discourse* on the questions of *inadequacy* and *capability* concerning OBC reservations for the community have been sidelined.

The research adopted non-random yet systematic purposive sampling with structure questions of 20 Meitei-Pangal specific CSOs leaders and activists, which had emerged before and after the 1993 Meitei and Meitei-Pangal riot. In-depth personal interviews with CSOs leaders in their residence and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with other CSOs activists when they were undertaking multiple community related programmes had been conducted so as to understand the subjective and psychological factor responsible for the formation of community specific CSOs in the post Meitei and Meitei-Pangal riot. Close-ended discussions were adopted in interviewing the CSO leaders so as to analyse the psychological aspects on the working of CSOs in Manipur in the post Meitei and Meitei-Pangal riots of 1993. These were connected with the critical reviews of the secondary literature on the questions of *otherisation* and *marginalisation* faced by the community during that time. OBCs reservation movement, undertook by AMMSO had been carried out by analysing various online news and information while arguing that *native minority* like Meitei-Pangal in Manipur have to survive within the dialectic of subaltern's *strategic essentialism* of Spivak and Haokip's *strategic manoeuvre* of being a tribe in Manipur which has finally culminated in the development of "strategic existentialism" for the community. Critical evaluations of the secondary literatures on *populist politics* by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government on the issue of *indigeneity* were analysed to argue that *hegemony* has taken hold over CSOs in both the valley and hill of Manipur. The functioning of *hegemony* within the Meitei-Pangal CSOs is hypothetically analysed by using secondary materials so as to put forward a remark that there is *NGO-ization of resistance* within CSOs representing Meitei-Pangal community. All interviews and discussions are transcribed as a clean-up transcript.

Emergence of the CSOs of Meitei-Pangal

Kipgen (2025) argues that the CSOs in Manipur is mainly ethnic based and exclusively designed to function and maintain a special position for their community within the existing political framework of Manipur. Before the Meitei and Meitei Pangal riots, most of the Meitei-Pangal activists had involved themselves in CSOs which had

an overbearing idea of collective identity, represented by the idioms “Manipur”. There is a commensurate relationship between CSOs and ethnic identity in Manipur (Kshetrimayum, 2024) and during any conflict and crisis, the *ethnocentric* attitudes within the said CSOs are at disposal. The insurgency related to *secessionist nationalism* within the valley in Manipur (see, Kshetri, 2006) has been reduced to *ethno-nationalism*, and this has also affected the ethnic relationship between the various communities in Manipur (Meitei, 2024).

The case of the 1993 riot is a clear indication of the above phenomena. Babu (2024b, p. 41) has highlighted that the apathetic response from the state and indifferent attitudes of civil societies of Manipur led to a long-term transmission of trauma between the two communities. And so, Meitei-Pangal activists no longer felt represented in the CSOs during that time and subsequently organised themselves into establishing CSOs of their own community. Akbar Shani⁶ has narrated that

‘Before the communal riot, we got affiliated with various CSOs representing Manipur. We had hardly any role. The majority of the decisions were made by those executive members belonging to the Meitei community’.

CSOs in Manipur have also sought to build exclusive space within the larger framework of the political system (Haokip, 2014). The same situation continued to prevail in the era marking the aftermath of the communal riot. And so, owing to the lack of *ownership* and *representation*, the Meitei-Pangal activists finally decided to form CSOs of their own. SM Jalal⁷, has opined that.

‘CSOs of Manipur had focused only on the participation of community members. The ownership and representation happened to be confined to the members of the majority Meitei community. And so, it became a compulsion on our part to form an organisation which can meaningfully represent and advance the voices and aspirations of our community’.

Another Meitei-Pangal activist during that time, named Raees Ahamed Tampak⁸, has also reiterated the above, highlighting that

‘During that time, the phenomenon could be described as “Might is Right”. The conditions of that time want our mental faculty to remain numb, ignorant, and invisible. We were in serious need of mobilising ourselves’.

And so, the lack of *representation*, *recognition*, and *ownership* faced by Meitei-Pangal activists during that time had induced them to form their own CSOs. They argued that doing this will provide them a *social space*. And as such, a democratic space for *civil society* has sprung up within the Meitei-Pangal community of Manipur.

AMMSO and other CSOs in the OBC Reservation of the Meitei-Pangal

During the early 2000s, Manipur’s reservation structure allotted 50 per cent of seats as follows: 2 per cent quota for SCs, 31 per cent for STs, and 17 per cent for OBCs. Meitei-Pangal were clubbed together with the majority Meitei community in the broader OBC quota. Meitei-Pangal CSOs had articulated that the community was structurally disadvantaged and required targeted AA (Syed, 2023b, p. 722). Yet, there was a need to address the questions for separate quota for Meitei-Pangal, as the broader category of OBCs includes both Meitei and Meitei-Pangal communities. But this broader homogenisation and clubbing together of various community within the OBC category failed to disclose the “hidden marginalisation” faced by communities like Meitei-Pangal and others in Manipur. The questions of *capability* had to be taken into account. A survey conducted in 2004 by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics and the Directorate of Minorities and Other Backwards Classes (MOBC) revealed that the Meitei Pangal community lagged behind others in every major socio-economic and educational indicator (“Socio-economic Survey,” 2004). Literacy rates were significantly lower (particularly among women), while dropout rates were high (due to economic hardship), participation in higher education remained dismal, agriculture and allied activities were the basic means for survival, and representation in government employment was negligible (Shah & Khan, 2019). Due to the above issues, clubbing Meitei-Pangal together with the majority Meitei community, the questions of *capability* were raised by the community as the community was not in a position to compete with the already advanced Meitei community. The severity of the problem was so stark that “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 a few in Veterinary and Engineering Courses” (see, Syed, 2018a, p. 246).

Against this backdrop, the Meitei-Pangal community under the banner of AMMSO had intensified its activities for the separate reservation of Meitei-Pangal within the OBC category, with Md. Hanif Shah at the forefront of the movement. Hanif Shah played an indispensable role in bringing the above issues into the public domain. Through campaigns, mobilizations, and public discussions, Shah highlighted the institutional and structural injustices faced by the Meitei-Pangals and helped transform the reservation movement for the community into a major public and political discourse in Manipur. The organisation started demanding redressal mechanisms in terms of education, employment, and access to state institutions. The student body had been demanding implementation of the Mandal Commission’s recommendations along with 10 % reservation for Meitei-Pangal within the OBC category (see, *Muslims Rally for 10 Pc Job Quota*, 2006). The organisation adopted symbolic and confrontational strategies; wearing black badges, organising sit-in protests, picketing government offices, and demanding the resignation of MLAs and Ministers of the ruling SPF Government along with their party workers. General strikes were also called as part of the pressure campaign (see, *AMMSO Sets Dec 24 Deadline*, 2006).

Finally, on December 27, 2006, the Government of Manipur’s Department of Personnel & Administrative Reforms issued an Office Memorandum restructuring reservation under OBC. After review, the State Government fixed 17 per cent OBC reservation and distributed it as follows:

Meitei/Meeteis (including Meitei Brahmin, Meetei/Meetei Sanamahi, Meitei Rajkumar, and Non-Scheduled Caste Lois) — 12.5%

Meitei Pangal — 4%

Telis domiciled in Manipur for 10 years (and their descendants), and the Badi, Damai, Gairey, Satki, and Kami (Nepali) communities domiciled in Manipur since 09-07-1947 — 0.5% (“Reservation in Appointment,” 2006). This reservation structure applied to government services as well as admissions to professional courses such as medical, engineering, veterinary, agricultural sciences, nursing, and polytechnic programs.

This decision marked a historic milestone. It demonstrated that united struggle could force systemic change, offering new hope for socio-economic mobility for the community. However, AMMSO still found the allotted quota insufficient. After the Government’s announcement, the organisation issued a statement expressing dissatisfaction and demanding an increase, arguing that the 4 per cent quota did not adequately reflect the depth of the community’s backwardness.

OBC status and strategic existentialism of Meitei-Pangal community

Khan and Thouba (2025) highlight that difference in faith, social status, and demography between the *native majority* (the Meitei) and *native minority* (Meitei-Pangal) has led to the deep-seated *prejudice*, *misrepresentation*, and *stereotyping* of the minority Meitei-Pangal in Manipur. Likewise, the attainment of OBC reservation within the Meitei-Pangal community was not an *altruistic* arrangement but a wilful “strategic manoeuvre” (see, Haokip, 2016) on the part of Manipur’s CSOs and the government in power during that time. This was particularly evident in the particular lack and absence of support for the movement by the CSOs representing the idioms of “Manipur”. Likewise, the government in power (under the leadership of the then C.M Okram Ibobi Singh) had strategically manipulated and manoeuvred the demand and struck a compromise that would not cause an uproar for the majority Meitei community. This was evident, for instance, in the fact that the demand for a 10 per cent quota had been reduced to 4 per cent and was limited to only government services and admission to professional courses such as medical, engineering, veterinary, agricultural sciences, nursing, and polytechnic programs without incorporating general non-professional educational courses (see, Syed, 2018b, p. 248).

So, the demand for OBC reservation had to be made by the students and community activists of Meitei-Pangal on the basis of *strategic existentialism*. As highlighted before, the rise of *ethno-nationalism* and the *ethnocentric*

nature of CSOs in Manipur had led the community to enforce and define their identity as a *distinct* CSOs in Manipur. This is complemented by fear and existential threat due to the 3rd May 1993 communal clash, in which the Manipuri Muslim had borne the brunt of it (see Arshad-Alam, 2020). Yet, the everyday existence of the common people within Meitei-Pangal had to locate their existence through their spatial proximity to its nearby ethnic group in the valley, which is the majority Meitei community.

Hassan (2006) argues that state-making leaders have captured political power by using Meitei identity, and this has finally culminated in developing a partisan nature of the state institutions (pp. 14 & 22). It needs to be mentioned here that the Meitei community, at that time, had been segregated into various categories like OBCs and SCs through the *altruistic* policy of the state government in Manipur. State-making leaders had incorporated various constitutional safeguards so as to not offend the Meitei identity. So, the constitutional demands for the Meitei-Pangal had to be done through *compromise* with the state and CSOs of the majority Meitei community so that the community can maintain its existence in Manipur. This strategic demand for asserting political rights in order to defend minimal and bare interest without offending the interest of the majority Meitei community and political leaders have been achieved through *strategic existentialism* by the student activists and CSOs of the Meitei-Pangal community.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The attainment of OBC quota of the Meitei-Pangal community has broadened the space for liberal education amongst the members of the community. The community members have also started migrating to metropolitan cities in India and abroad (especially in Gulf countries) to further enhance their academic and professional careers (see Khan, 2022; Khan, 2023). This has broadened the discourse for defining and adapting their self. But the period after the 2010s has shown an aggressive push in juxtaposing *tribes* with being *indigenous* in Manipur, with the demand for the Meitei community to be included in the Scheduled Tribes (STs) category under the banner of the Scheduled Tribes Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM) since 2012 (see, *Demand of Meities for ST Status*, 2023). That was coincided with the demand for implementing the Inner Line Permit system (ILPs), which had also, sought to protect the rights of indigenous people of Manipur.

Singh (2023) argues that the emergence of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Manipur is primarily due to its engagement with Meitei *majoritarian* politics while *marginalising* other *religious* and *ethnic minorities*. The BJP government in Manipur, after 2017, has used the demand for the ST and ILPs by the Meitei community in its *populist* politics on the discourse of *indigeneity* in Manipur. There is also a categorisation of people in Manipur into the “indigenous people”/ “yelhou-mee” versus the “others” (see Hussain, 2025, p. 3). In a multi-ethnic region like Manipur, the *populist politics* of BJP (see Hausing, 2025) has radicalised many youths within Manipur. Thus, CSOs have started aligning themselves with political parties of the ruling government. The civil society space in Manipur is being shrunk (Bobichand, 2025) and radicalising CSOs and youths on the politics of *populism* is also a major factor responsible for it. Brombo (2021, pp. 239-240) argues that CSOs, under populist government, is recast as a loyal extension of the populist movement. This has finally culminated on a governance system in Manipur where state government, under BJP, has an upper hand in controlling and manipulating the *civic space* of Manipuri society. Finally, CSOs became more or less a space for *hegemony* in the *populist* politics around the issues of *indigeneity* in Manipur.

There are sections of civil societies within Meitei-Pangal seeking extension of OBC reservation in Non-Professional Higher Education (Ali, 2020), with AMMSO being the flagbearer of it (*Students Demand Four per Cent*, 2022). Nonetheless, the mass base of AMMSO appeared to be dwindling, and the momentum of this movement is also subsiding. In addition to this, the majority of the CSOs of the Meitei-Pangal have also shifted to a new demand for the inclusion of the community within the Scheduled Tribe status (Firoj, 2024). The civil society of Meitei-Pangal often operates within a limited space framed by the state, and they have to negotiate with multiple actors within the government. Moreover, the lack of elected representative for the community (see Mujtaba, 2023) to address their concerns has also hampered them in accessing their democratic rights. This glaring reality put the CSOs of Meitei-Pangal in a situation whereby their demands and aspirations are often negotiated at the mercy of the ruling government. The CSOs and their leaders have their relevance only through slogans and symbolism, without providing any redressal mechanisms for the various issues and grievances of

the community. Instead of demanding accountability and justice for their community, CSOs work like an executive branch of the government, implementing various government programs and policies. Thus, civil society space for the Meitei-Pangal community is shrinking, and the major factors responsible for it are: lack of mass-based mobilisation, unclear ideological aspiration, lack of social resources to negotiate and mobilise people and leaders from other communities, and the rise of *populism* around the issue of *indigeneity* in Manipur.

Various CSOs and its' leaders have been cropped up under BJP government in Manipur and N. Biren Singh (the immediate past Chief Minister of Manipur) has also acknowledged it (see, Hasnat & Donald S, 2023). An initial finding suggests that CSOs and its' leader within Manipur (both Hill and Valley) have negotiated their space by wilfully crafted a *narrative*, where *discourse* on *ethnicity* (profoundly evident within themselves while materially insignificant), has, instead, tried looking for an *ethnic economy*. Some hypothesis is developed in this writing while asking

1. Is there a new form of *civil space* in Manipur solely for maintaining their position vis-à-vis the government in power?
2. Do ethnically inclined leaders willingly create themselves as leader for the emergence of an ethno-centric CSOs?

Likewise, engagement with Meitei-Pangal CSO activists have also highlighted (unintentionally) that the government has devised plans and policies towards NGOs, and CSOs and NGOs often work in tandem for implementing those in Manipur. A hypothesis is furthered developed here that there is *Ngo-isation of resistance* within the Meitei-Pangal CSOs in Manipur and researchers are furthered encouraged in analysing the above phenomenon in Manipur.

Notes

¹The Meitei are the predominant ethnic group in the Indian state of Manipur, with its demography being primarily concentrated in the Imphal Valley. They have a Tibeto-Burman language (Meitei language, also called Manipuri), and their religious practices consist of traditional Sanamahism and Hinduism.

²The Pangal, which is also known as Meitei Mussalman, Manipuri Muslim, Meitei-Pangal, are the Muslim community of Manipur. They are related to the Meitei ethnic group, speak the Meitei language and are predominantly settled in the valley areas, particularly in and around Imphal.

³The Naga in Manipur is a collection of several Tibeto-Burman tribes who primarily inhabit the hill districts of the state, particularly in Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Chandel. The majority of them are Christians, which was a result of missionary influence during the British colonial era. This shared faith has helped in forging a sense of common and unique identity among the diverse tribes.

⁴The Kuki people are a group of various tribal communities in Manipur, predominantly residing in the hill areas in Manipur, with a significant population in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Tengnoupal, etc. The majority of them have also follow Christianity.

⁵Nisha Band is a powerful women-led agitation in Manipur, started in the early 1970s, which aims to combat drug and alcohol abuse in society.

⁶Akbar Shani is an executive committee member of UMO (United Muslim Organisation) from Khomidok Epum Mapal, aged 60; was interviewed on 13/05/2025. The author expressed his willingness to acknowledge his name on this work.

⁷S.M. Jalal was once an executive member and is the current President of AMMOCOC (All Manipur Muslim Organisation Co-ordinating Committee). Took the interview with him on multiple times, once in Delhi on 04/09/2018, 06/10/2019 and on his residence on 26/09/2025. The author expressed his willingness to explicitly acknowledge his name on this work.

⁸Raees Ahamed Tampak, currently the General Secretary of UMPC (United Meitei Pangal Committee), Manipur was interviewed on multiple times on Delhi on 08/11/ 2023, 05/05/2025 and through a telephonic conversation again on 07/03/2026. The author expressed his willingness to explicitly acknowledge his name on this work along with the organization in which he is currently affiliated.

Statements and declarations

The author(s) can be held responsible for any unethical conduct, be it in terms of data collection or publication.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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