

**NARRATIVIZING INSURGENCY: A STUDY OF SELECTED  
FICTIONS ON INSURGENCIES IN MIZORAM, MANIPUR AND  
NAGALAND**

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Submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Master of  
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# **DECLARATION**

Mizoram University  
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**July, 2017**

**I, C. Lalthangliana Junior, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for research degree in any other University/ Institute.**

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**CERTIFICATE**

**This is to certify that the dissertation entitled *Narrativizing Insurgency: A Study of Selected Fictions on Insurgencies in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland* submitted to Mizoram University by C. Lalthangliana Junior in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in English is purely an original research work accomplished by the scholar under my direct supervision and neither the dissertation nor any part of it has so far been submitted to any educational institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I am, therefore, glad to recommend in all fairness that this dissertation be sent to the examiner(s) for expeditious evaluation for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.**

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## Abbreviations Used in the Dissertation

AFSP	Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
LDC	Lower Division Clerk
RSA	Repressive State Apparatus
KCP	Kangleipak Communist Party
MNF	Mizo National Front
MNFF	Mizo National Famine Front
NNC	Naga National Council
NSCN-IM	National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak-Muivah
NSCN-K	National Socialist Council of Nagaland –Khaplang
PLA	People’s Liberation Army
PREPAK	People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak
PULF	People’s United Liberation Front,
RGM	Revolutionary Government of Manipur
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organization
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UNLF	United National Liberation Front
YMA	Young Mizo Association
YLA	Young Lushai Association

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Insurgency<sup>1</sup> has been one of the most distinct characterizing features of Northeast<sup>2</sup> India since the emergence of India as an independent nation. It is, as per the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, an attempt to take control of a country by force. 'Force' here basically means violent and military means. However, this definition falls short as it confines or rather limits the aims of insurgency to taking control of a state. It is derived from the Latin word 'insurgere' which means 'to rise up'. In most cases, an insurgency is basically an armed uprising, a violent revolution or rebellion by a militant group or groups to overthrow existing political establishment. Sometimes it is also an endeavour by the same means, for a secession or in other words, political independence by people with claims to geopolitical territory and separate ethnicity. In this connection, Biswas and Suklabaidya argues that an, "insurgency signifies a moment of rapture or disruption that generates a counter discourse to the already experienced milieu of subjection, alienation and compulsion. It articulates a sense of dispossession and betrayal tinged with the pathos of coercion and violence. As an experience of negativity it constitutes attempts of uprising and insurrection in order to counter blast the dominant symbolic order" (154). The world has seen an increase in the number of insurgency as it recorded more than hundreds in quantity within just four decades since the end of the Second World War (Borgohain & Deb 326).

The Northeast region of India too is no exception to all these phenomena of insurgency. In fact it has often been called the heart of India's insurgency. Each state in this region is occupied by certain ethnic tribe(s) with its own geographical and political history. Most of these states have all experienced insurgency, and most of them still continue to experience it even

today. The Northeast region is home to some of the earliest and longest conflicts in India. The Nagas started their rebellion for independence as early as 1951 by organizing a plebiscite<sup>3</sup>. This was then succeeded by the Mizo rebellion in 1966, and ever since the 1970s the region has witnessed the proliferation of such similar movements. As per Subir Kumar Das, there are about sixty five major militant groups currently operating in the region, and with the exception of Sikkim, all the states of the region are constantly dogged or had been affected by insurgency related violence, and the scale of violence and conflicts, specifically in the four state of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Tripura between 1990 to 2000, could be categorised as perpetual low intensity conflict with casualties of more than 100 but less than 1000 every year (1). In this connection Subir Bhaumik has written:

Ever since decolonization, India's North East has been scarred by violent agitations, sustained separatist insurgencies, ethnic riots and heavy-handed state response, all leading to considerable bloodletting. The region has witnessed large-scale insurgent violence, frequent fighting between militia factions representing different ethnicities or competing for the loyalty of the same ethnic group and the huge deployment of security forces on a sustained basis. The consequent militarization has impeded the growth of civil society and restricted the space in which it can thrive. Rampant violations of human rights and use of terror by both state and non-state actors, ethnic cleansing and extra-judicial killings have weakened the political system and the social fabric and have led to substantial displacement of populations. (88)

Insurgency thus becomes a shared history of the region. However, the root cause of these insurgencies becomes a site of contestation. Jairam Ramesh, while addressing this issue, classifies the Indian Government's approaches towards the Northeast into four paradigms; the



‘exotic cultural paradigm’, the ‘security paradigm,’ the ‘politics paradigm’ and the ‘development paradigm’. He then continues to argue that the ‘development paradigm’ which has been in vogue since 1980 has not been successful in tackling the problems because after 50 years of special economic packages the region is still in crisis (Ramesh 2005). Sanjib Baruah too has written: “While New Delhi expects the magic bullet of development to eventually come to the rescue, for the moment, in a region that is peripheral to the national imaginary, the cost of letting low-intensity conflicts proliferate and fester are seen as affordable” (3) In this connection, Samir Kumar Das has also written: “The peace making and conflict resolution frameworks employed to date have not worked in the ways that had been expected; a reevaluation of the conflicts and approaches to conflict resolution, using what Prime Minister Manmohan Singh calls ‘out-of-the-box solutions,’ is necessary” (1). Bhaumik, on the other hand, explains the Government’s approaches and policies towards these insurgencies in Northeast as a “traditional Hindu realpolitik statecraft” devised by the great Kautilya. He writes,

Kautilya’s four principles of Sham (political reconciliation), Dam (monetary inducement), Danda (force) and Bhed (split) has been amply applied in dealing with the insurgents of North East—more than anywhere else in post-colonial India...After the initial use of force has helped contain the insurgent movements, the Indian state has been quick to offer political negotiations (Sham) to talk the insurgents into settlements that offered substantial autonomy (including separate states) and liberal doses of federal development funds (Dam). But if that did not work, India has freely used its covert agencies to split the insurgents on ethnic, religious or ideological lines to take the sting out of the separatist movements (Bhed). (90)

Manjeet Baruah argues that it is imperative to look at the history of the Northeast region itself which was marked by independence and autonomy hitherto colonialism – it was only with and after colonialism that it became part of a political state, and prior to colonialism it was never part of any political system (28). If one looks and listens to the voices of the many insurgencies of the region, the same argument has been constantly articulated and expressed by many of the insurgent groups of the region. The types of insurgencies that are taking place in the region are themselves suggestive of this sentiment. There are, according Asthana and Nirmal, six different types of insurgencies; ‘secessionist insurgency’, ‘revolutionary insurgency’, ‘restorational insurgency’, ‘reactionary insurgency’, ‘conservative insurgency’ and ‘reformist insurgency’ (22).

In this sense, most of the insurgencies in Northeast India fall within the category of the secessionist insurgency that reject the existing political power and seek to constitute a new sovereign and autonomous state of its own as most of them, including the ones from Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland have made it amply clear through their memorandum and statements since, and even before the time of their inception. The Nagas, in their 1929 memorandum that was submitted to the Simon Commission, clearly expressed their lack of interest in joining the Indian state thereby expressing their desire to remain independent (Lintner 58). In fact, they declared their independence just the day before the independence of India (Bhaumik 95). Similarly, the Mizos, in their 1965 memorandum to the Prime Minister of India expressed their pre-colonial independence and their desire to be independent again (Zama 11). Similarly, Manipur’s UNLF (United National Liberation Front) declared their ‘mission’ to liberate Manipur from India in the year 1964.

In this connection, it should be noted that some of the insurgencies in Manipur, besides falling within the secessionist category, can also be included within the ‘revolutionary

insurgency' category as some of the most well established insurgent organizations like the PLA (People's Liberation Army), PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak), KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party) are all avowed Marxist that are hell bent on establishing an independent, autonomous egalitarian society. Here, their ideological orientation and response to the prevailing political system entail a rejection of the Indian state and a reclamation of their pre-colonial political status.

Subir Baumik, in his book *Troubled Periphery* has also argued that the Northeast region was first constructed by the British colonialist and this was then adopted by the Indian state after independence (4). Similarly, Samir Kumar Das, in his book, *Governing India's Northeast* has written: "'Eastern Frontier'—constitutes a relatively inaccessible and loosely administered land that is inhabited by largely secluded, autonomous and self-ruling communities...." (22). Insurgent groups from Nagaland, Mizoram and most of the groups from Manipur have drawn directly from this history and have projected the cause of their insurgency as the reclamation of such pre-colonial political status.

The Northeast, in terms of geography, is connected to the rest of India through what is known as the 'chicken neck corridor' in northern West Bengal, a stretch of 22 km between Bangladesh and Bhutan. This constitutes one percent of the entire region's boundary. The other ninety nine percent of its boundary is shared with China to the North, Bangladesh to the South West and Bhutan to the North West and Myanmar to the East. It consists of eight states i.e. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It has an agglomeration of about 475 ethnic groups and sub-groups, speaking over 400 languages/dialects. The huge demographic diversity of the region is clearly reflected in the fact that the region constitutes over 200 communities out of the 635 tribal communities listed in India

and out of the 325 languages listed by the People of India Project, 175 of them that belong to the Tibeto-Burman are spoken in the region (Bhaumik 2). Samir Kumar Das, describing the region, says: “The region, viewed from outside, looks both homogeneous and distinct from the mainland in geographical, economic, cultural and political terms; although, from within it represents one of India’s most diverse and heterogeneous of all regions” (2). In terms of area, the region covers over 255,088 km<sup>2</sup> which makes up around 7.7 percent of India’s territory. As per the 2001 Census of India, it has over thirty millions in population which constitutes 3.74 % of India’s population (Das 1).

Colonialism in the region, took hold in the 19 century with the treaty of Yandabo in 1826, which was signed between the Burmese kingdom and the British. This treaty was followed by the eventual annexation of the entire region. The accession of the Northeast without the consent of its diverse inhabitants was one of India’s first priorities after it became independent in 1947. The Nagas were the first to react and reject this accession as early as 1951. In 1956 the NNC (Naga National Council) started taking up arms. The Mizos and the Manipuris followed suit in 1966 in 1964 respectively with the formation of armed organizations like the Mizo National Front (hereafter MNF) and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF). The Mizo insurgency ended in 1986 after twenty years. The Nagas and the Manipuris are still active, making the Naga movement the longest of its kind in the region.

Insurgent organizations in the Northeast region, in their effort to make their political point to the people and the authority of the existing state, confront state authority with various means including violent and non violent activities. In this regard, Asthana and Nirmal define insurgency:

...as a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the former consciously employs political resources (organizational skills, propaganda and/or demonstration) and instruments of (ostensibly illegal) violence to establish legitimacy for some aspect of the political system it considers illegitimate. Thus an insurgency is an exertion in open resistance against a constitutional government or established authority which falls short of a revolution or civil war. It is important to note that the emphasis is on 'open resistance' or 'defiance' of the authority, and its falling short of a revolution or civil war. If the rebellion succeeds, it becomes a revolution meaning that the insurgency is over - from opposition to authority, it becomes the authority itself. One man's insurgent could easily be another man's freedom fighter. (13-14).

Thus, the reclamation of the pre-colonial condition of existence marked by political freedom pervades the entire conflicts in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. From the respective perspectives of the insurgents, it has been a struggle, a fight for independence. The purpose and process of insurgency, as per Asthana and Nirmal, however, are to destabilize the government in terms of its economy, its administration and in terms of its psychology. Insurgent groups hold the advantages over the government in the fact that they are illusive to the state governments as the governments have a barely visible target, while having so much to lose. Thus, by disrupting the stability of the government, insurgency creates an image of an unstable government, one that is likely to falter and collapse. And as such, insurgency becomes the means by which freedom, independence and autonomy are pursued.

Any insurgency requires a cause to fight for and people to support the cause. Without any support from the general public, on whose behalf the insurgency is supposed to be carried out, the movement becomes a stray movement that poses burden to both the government against

which it is rebelling and its people. In this regard, Asthana and Nirmal emphasize the necessity and importance of popular support. According to them, popular support could be garnered through what they called a “charismatic attraction” that garners support for the cause of insurgency through charisma such as oratorical skills exuded by leaders, and also through “esoteric appeal” which, for the most part is directed towards the intellectuals and the intelligentsia. This method seeks to clarify and justify insurgency in ideological and theoretical terms and contexts. They write:

...it has been seen that doctrinal rationalizations for violence can themselves intensify discontent by increasing expectations and defending violence as a means to their attainment[of the goals]. On the other hand “esoteric appeals” focuses on the concrete grievances of both the intelligentsia and the masses. These may involve problems like that of unemployment, corruption and repression by local officials, shortage of food...etc. The insurgent must hold out the promise that all these problems would be taken care of once they achieve their goal. It has also been pointed out that an ideology that appeals to national identity is the most powerful symbolic means of mobilizing revolutionary support. (27)

In the case of Northeast India, and the states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in particular, the support for insurgency, to a large extent, is engendered by the causes taken up by the insurgent groups themselves that are, as mentioned before, drawn directly from their pre-colonial history of freedom and independence, causes that seek to reclaim such political condition in the face of an overwhelming threat with the accession of their land into a larger state. All these nature, trajectories and contours of the insurgencies in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland are amply narrated in Malsawmi Jacob’s *Zorami*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s *Love in the Time*

of *Insurgency* and Keisham Priyokumar's "One Night", "The Rains did not Come" and "Moon and Rahu".

Malsawmi Jacob is a Mizo writer based in Bangalore. She has taught English literature in schools and colleges for over twelve years and has already published six books on poetry, short stories and non fictions. She started writing poems and prose in high school. *Zorami* is her first novel and her seventh book. Her other books include a collection of poem in Mizo and English, a collection of short stories, two books on children's stories and two narrative non-fiction. She has also worked as a freelance journalist when she was living in Guwahati.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was born in 1925 and died on 6 August 1997. He was a science teacher in the Venture Christian Mission High School at Ukhrul, Manipur for two years (1950-1952). He was the president of Assam's Sahitya Sabha during 1983-1985. He was also the first Assamese to receive the Jnanpith Award in 1979 for his novel *Mrityunjay (Immortal)*. He also won the Sahitya Akademi Award in Assamese in 1961 for his novel *Iyaruingham* (1960), which is the Assamese version of *Love in the Time of Insurgency* (2005), which he had translated into English in 1984. Bhattacharyya had written ten novels (eleven including *Love in the Time of Insurgency*).

Keisham Priyokumar, on the other hand, is a Manipuri writer. He was born in 1949. He is a civil engineer by profession and has published many short story collections. He won the Shaitya Akademi Award for his short story collection *Nongdi Tarakkhidare (The Rains did not Come)* in 1995. The story has also been adapted into a Manipuri feature film.

Cultural theory such as new historicism has increasingly turned towards fictional narratives like the novel and the short story to gain knowledge about a particular period in the

past. As per Hans Barten, “The new historicism is, in the tradition of Foucault, focused on thus far hidden and unsuspected sources of, and vehicles for, power and on the question of how power has worked to suppress or marginalize rival stories and discourses. It has a special interest in the disempowered, the marginalized, those whose voices we hardly ever, or never, hear” (158). It relies on a, “parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period” (Barry 179). Similarly, this research examines representation of insurgencies in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur in the fictional narratives of the said authors. These fictions, as cultural artifacts in the dispensation of history, offer the narrative space for not only just the official political voices and perspective of the insurgent groups and the tribal communities but also offer through its characters an insight into the lived experience of insurgency and counter-insurgency. Counter-insurgency programs and operations, as per Hemo Singh, “always involved blood, tears, slaughters, fears and illusion” (xii). Thus the fictions gives us the true nature of the insurgency beyond their official representations and data and statistics. Fictional narratives, unlike historiography, offer the lived social experiences of insurgency and can even offer the psychological contours of the people through its characters. In this connection, Mark Currie has written:

How can techniques in narrative point of view control a reader’s sympathy for characters?... (1) We are more likely to sympathise with people when we have a lot of information about their inner lives, motivations, fears and so on; and (2) We sympathise with people when we see other people who do not share our success to their inner lives judging them harshly or incorrectly. In life, we get this kind of information through intimacy, friendship or Oprah Winfrey. In fiction we get it through the narrator, either reliably reported by the narrator or through direct access to the minds of



characters...Information alone cannot elicit a sympathetic response. Sometimes it is the careful control of the flow of information, of where it comes from and how it is presented, which controls a reader's judgment" (27-28)

As such, insurgency is explored or rather narrativized in the aforementioned fictional narratives and they offer a firsthand account of the lived experience of insurgency both at the individual, domestic and community level. Thus, it gives us a more comprehensive view of the dynamics of such insurgencies. For example, we know for a fact that some 10500 Kukis and 2500 Nagas were displaced from their original settlements as a result of the Naga-Kuki conflict of the 1990s (Singh 185). However, the numbers somehow do not communicate to us the horrors and brutality of the conflict and the hardships brought upon the people caught up in the conflict. On the other hand Priyokumar through the characters of Chongnikim in "The Rains did not Come" and the characters of Lingpao and Stephen in "One Night" explicitly explores and exposes the extreme horror and hardships at both the individual and the community level.

In "The Rains did not Come" Chongnikim lost her husband as a result of an inter-ethnic war. As a result of this loss, she suffered extreme emotional and mental breakdown in which she found herself constantly hallucinating the extreme bloodshed that had been carried out as a result of an inter ethnic conflict between the Kukis and the Nagas. She frequently saw in her hallucination her deceased husband coming home from his last fishing in the river from which he never came back. Here we find Chongnikim displaced geographically and socially and emotionally. It is because her entire village had to shift to another village for their security thus leaving her property as well as her home where her husband Lungjahao was buried. Similarly, in "One Night" Priyokumar explores the deep personal and social effects of the same conflict. The character Lingpao, a Kuki had lost his brother and his family in an inter-ethnic conflict between

the Nagas and the Kukis. The night that followed the killing was one of distrust, fear and anxiety between Lingpao and his Naga friend who had been sharing his quarter for several years. Stephen, having no longer able to put his trust on their friendship, had to hide the machete in the quarter under his bed for his easy accessibility and so that Lingpao would not find it. With the anxiety and fear in Lingpao, both were unable to sleep in the fear that the other might turn on him.

Bhattacharyya and Jacob give us an insight into another dark facet of insurgency the barbarity of which is often ignored and overlooked. In *Love in the Time of Insurgency* Bhattacharyya narrates how insurgencies become detrimental to the unity of a community. In the novel, the Second World War was immediately followed by an ethnic insurgency aimed at achieving an independent Naga nation, propagated and spearheaded by the character Videssellie. However, there was a large segment of the population that did not want insurgency but rather wanted to merge with India and followed the path of peace. The propaganda finally boiled over and Videssellie ordered for the execution of his main opponents Rishang and Jivan. The detrimental effects of such conflict are echoed by the man that was sent to carry out the execution who said, “the times have changed for the worse, dividing the tribe” (Bhattacharyya 229). Similarly, Jacob shows us an explicit account of the tyrannical nature of the MNF (Mizo National Front) in Mizoram on its own people through the character of Lalawmpuia, an MNF soldier who was ordered by his superior to kill his own uncle for being critical of the MNF.

Similar instance of this can also be seen in Priyokumar too, as he clearly delineates in “Moon and Rahu” the burden caused by the insurgent groups on the people by their extortion activities which they carried out in the name of ethnic nationalism. Priyokumar gives us a clear portrayal of the loss of support by the general public for the rebel groups who were claiming to

be fighting on their behalf. The old lady, the rebels had robbed off, cursed out loud immediately, expressing her wish for them to die. Both Priyokumar and Jacob have given us the brutality and extreme measures taken by the Indian army in their counter-insurgency operations. In *Zorami* Jacob has given us a sordid account a counter-insurgency strategy carried out by the Indian army i.e. the 'Village Grouping' or the 'Regrouping of Village'. The novel shows how people of different villages were forced to move in a place which is like a concentration camp where they were confined without proper sanitary arrangement or necessary foods. In "Moon and Rahu", the narrator, along with his fellow bus passengers, after being robbed off everything they had by an insurgent group were being questioned by the Indian army. The narrator was physically violated as he was punched by an army on the face and then was accused of being a terrorist and then kicked again as he passed out of consciousness. Priyokumar specifically gives us a sordid yet lucid portrayal of how the civilians are torned between the demands of the insurgent groups and the whims of the Indian army. They are exploited by both the Government and the rebels, and thus reflect the complete breakdown of civil order

The three writers have also explored and candidly portrayed the experience of women, the hardships they faced and shed new lights on different facets of women's suffering in the times of insurgency. Bhattacharyya's Sharengla is a fallen woman who had lived with a foreign Japanese enemy without marriage. The soldier then left her in order to save his life when the Japanese were defeated in the Second World War. Sharengla, after she was left behind by her Japanese soldier became an alienated woman who had lost her dignity and status as a woman in the traditional set up of the Tangkhul community of Ukhrul. Jacob on the other hand has shown us the cruelty suffered by women at the hands of the Indian army. The protagonist *Zorami* was raped at her young age by an Indian soldier. This affected her throughout her life. She suffered

from a post traumatic stress and resulted in her mental instability. On the other hand, Sharengla's story exposes the true position and status of women in a patriarchal communal set up especially during an armed upheaval. Priyokumar goes beyond the usual victimization of woman in "The Rains did not Come" by showing how Chongnikim has become socially, economically and geographically displaced as she has lost her husband in an inter-ethnic conflict. She has to leave the village where her husband was buried. The death of her husband has also left her in a very bad condition as she has to take up the responsibility of her husband in a society dominated by men.

The three writers, through their fictional narratives, have given us new insights into the experiences of insurgency from an insider's perspective. Their works have thrown new lights on the nature of the sufferings endured by the people and on the nature of the insurgencies. They have given us valuable insider's perspectives that help us understand the complexities of insurgency and its human side in the three states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term 'insurgency' has now become associated with terms and notions like extremism, militancy, rebellion etc. and such terms have been ascribed and emphasized with expediency by the mainstream media and intelligentsia to describe insurgency movements in the Northeast. In spite of such discourse the term will not be substituted but be appropriated to suit the cause of such movements in the Northeast.

<sup>2</sup> The word 'Northeast' used in this dissertation means the eight Indian states in the northeastern region namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. Though it is written as 'North-east' or 'North East' or 'North-East' in various texts, the term "Northeast" is used throughout the dissertation to maintain uniformity.

<sup>3</sup> The Naga National Council (NNC), under the leadership of Phizo, organized a Plebiscite on 16 May 1951 in which 99.99% of the Naga population voted in favour of an independent Nagaland but was dismissed by the Indian authorities.

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## Chapter II

### **Insurgency: A Shared History of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland**

India's Northeast has a population of over 30 million. Hinduism is the major religion in Manipur, Assam and Tripura while Christianity spreads in Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya. There are also other indigenous religious beliefs in most of the eight states of the region. The eight states of the region share similarities in terms of demography, culture, social, linguistic and anthropological behavior, and also have affinities in terms of their Tibeto-Mongoloid and Tibeto-Burman linkages. As Sanjib Baruah puts it, "Arunachalis, Assamese, Garo, Khasis, Manipuris, Mizos, Nagas and Tripuris may indeed have some phenotypical similarities related to genetics" (166).

The region saw the rise of insurgency in 1950s and 1960s with sections of the Nagas, Mizos and the Manipuris taking up arms against the newly independent India. Some of the well known insurgent outfits still active today in the region include the PLA (People's Liberation Army), the UNLF (United National Liberation Front), PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak), KCP (Kangleipak Communist Party), PULF (Peoples Liberation Front), ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam), NSCN-IM (National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak-Muivah) and NSCN-K (National Socialist Council of Nagaland –Khaplang). Insurgency is a shared political history of the region and particularly of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. The state of Manipur alone has thirty nine active outfits, while Assam has thirty six. Meghalaya has experienced the activities of four militant groups, while Tripura has suffered the activities of thirty militant groups. Nagaland on the other hand has three militant groups. Mizoram has



experienced one activity, while Arunachal has experienced two (Lalthakima 2). Whenever it arises, it always go hand in hand with violence and guerilla warfare and always amounts to countless loss of life on both sides - the insurgents and the state. It is always an endeavour, a revolution that brings countless atrocities upon its own people. It brings about economic breakdown and failure in administration. People suffer from both the insurgent groups and also from whatever counter-insurgency method that the existing political power employs.

Most of the states in the Northeast have undergone insurgency, and many are still facing it even today. Sanjib Baruah, in *Beyond Counter-Insurgency* has written: “Rebel groups remain active for long periods even though they know that goals like secession have little chance of success” (3). One is immediately confronted with the question - why? Jairam Ramesh argues that the Government of India’s answer to this question is economic backwardness (Ramesh 2005). In this connection, Mazumdar has written: “One of the reasons in (sic) unemployment. Coupled with this, is the economic backwardness of the entire zone, virtually speaking, none of these states are having any large scale industries worth mentioning...as a result, the youths do not find proper outlets and resort to violence, drug-abuse and other forms of social-evil” (308). However, Jairam Ramesh further argues that the government has been hell bent on solving the problems of insurgencies in the region by giving special economic packages, but even after fifty years of this special packages, the region is still in turmoil (Ramesh 2005). In sharp contrast to this economic cause put forth by the Government, Manjeet Baruah has written:

If one tries to understand what lies at the core of the historically difficult relationship between the nation state of India and its Northeast frontier, it is imperative to return to the colonial period. One of the distinctive problems that the British faced vis-à-vis the Northeast frontier was how to naturalize a non natural frontier. The Northeast frontier

was a colonial invention, since prior to the nineteenth century, it never existed as a frontier to any political state system, whether of South Asia, East Asia or Southeast Asia. In fact it did not exist as a part of a political state of any of the above three geopolitical zones prior to British occupation. (28)

British colonialism in India began in 1757 A.D through the East India Company. Initial contact between the East India Company and India was through trade. The British eventually took both political and economic control of the entire sub continent of India. However, British India and the Northeast remained isolated from each other for the most part until the signing of the treaty of Yandabo in 1826. Before colonialism held its sway in Northeast India, most of the regions were never considered as part of the Indian Territory. Instances of this can be seen in the letter to the Royal Simon Commission by the Naga tribal leaders:

Before the British Government conquered our country in 1878-1880 we were living in a state of intermittent warfare with the Assamese of the Assam valley to the North and West of our country and Manipuris to the South. They never conquered us, nor were we subjected to their rule. On the other hand, we were always a terror to these people...quite different from one another with quite different language which cannot be understood by each other...we have no unity among us and it is only the British Government that is holding us together now...that the British Government will continue to safeguard our rights against all encroachments from other people who are more advanced than us.. ..If the British Government, however, wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never subjugate us, but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in the ancient times” (as qtd. in Lintner 58-59).

The Mizo National Front, in similar instance, argued that Mizos never belonged to any particular nation states until colonialism held its sway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this regards C. Zama has written that “the Mizos had never been under Indian Government and never had any connection with the policies and politics of the various groups of Indian opinion” (12). He even quotes a supposed press statement by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, dated August 19, 1946 that states: “The tribal areas are defined as being those along the frontier of India which are neither part of India nor of Burma, nor of any India[n] state, nor any foreign powers” (as qtd. in Zama 12).

During the British administration the different tribes of the Northeast region were protected by the Inner Line Regulations. Basically, this law prohibited the plain people from going into the tribal regions. The law was first introduced in 1873 as the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, but is now commonly known as the Inner Line Regulations or the Inner Line Permits, and is still operational in the states of Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland till date. The adoption of this Inner Line Regulations by the British Colonialists, however, has come under attack many a time for creating boundaries both imaginary and political between the tribal people and Mainland India. In this connection B.B Kumar argues that the seed of insurgency was planted by the colonialists and their policy towards the Northeast region. The segregation of the tribal population from that of the non-tribal by introducing the Inner Line Regulation, creation of “non regulated”, “backward” and “excluded” initially broke “centuries of historical, cultural, social and religious continuum and connectedness” (18). The Naga insurgency also developed from this historical background - from the background of spatial and political segregation that was committed by the British Colonisers. When Nagaland became the 16<sup>th</sup> state of the Indian Union in 1963, it basically became a calling for other states to rise up. But, it should also be

noted that this Regulations was adopted by the Colonialists to protect the tribal people from economic, cultural and political assimilation by the plain people.

Pariyaram M. Chacko argues that the eight states of Northeast do not face “land alienation” like other tribals from other regions of the country (17). In this connection Jaganath Pathy has written:

...compared to the central tribal belt, tribal in this region control their survival resources (80 per cent are cultivators here as against 52 percent in central India and 36 per cent in the peninsular south). They are in fact a majority in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. There the non tribal population - mostly traders and businessmen - continues to remain almost urban, and thus does not contemplate alienating or expropriation of survival resources by the state. The movements there are for political autonomy, including secession and independent state formation. The official formation of mini-states has not yet curtailed the urge for freedom with dignity. It is almost daily news to find militant insurgency in some or other part of this tribal region. (40)

It has enabled tribal people to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity as well as their land from the plain people.

In other words, the ‘Inner Line Regulations’ has enabled the diverse tribes of the Northeast region to preserve their land and their resources from the plain people. Rather, what causes discontentment and conflict in the region is the formation of India as a nation state which has led to the clash between the Indian nationalism and the different ethnic nationalisms in the Northeast. Dennes L. Thompson and Dove Ronen write:

Now ethnicity, (ethnic group, ethnic nationalism) tended to be viewed as destabilizing, potentially revolutionary forces that threatened to disintegrate states or at least to disrupt their smooth functioning...ethnicity or ethnic nationalism competes with nation-state.... In colonized state, in a fight to eliminate colonial ruler, ethnicity was put behind or under the mantle of nationalistic. However, the fact remained that most of the newly independent states inherited their colonial boundaries which enclosed what later came to be called sub national entities. This meant that varieties of people with different traditions and memories of hostile relations with other groups were included within the same national boundaries. (as qtd in Thoring 30)

The Nagas, according Thuingaleng Muivah, the General Secretary of the NSCN(IM), were once a nation but were divided by the British and then by India without the consent of the Naga people. Their land was divided without their consent between Burma and India. NSCN (IM) holds the view that all those Naga-inhabited areas in India and Burma, are all part of an independent Naga nation called 'Nagalim' (Baruah 241).

However, it should be noted that the division by the British that Muivah talked about is the division of a physical land into different territories and boundaries, and the Naga existing as a nation in the pre colonial times is also highly questionable. Bertil Lintner writes: "The various Naga tribes, who in the early days were not really tribes but groups of villages, were constantly at war with each other- and with the politically and socially more advanced people of the Bhrmaputra plain" (Lintner 44-47). If anything, it could be said that it was the British missionaries and Christianity and the colonialist administrative structure and social values that really unified the Nagas into a unified tribe in the late nineteenth century. Biswas and Suklabaidya argues that "Christianity and the control of a modern nation-state are the two most

significant factors that have contributed to the making of Naga identity at a pan-tribal level that centers around nationalism based on cultural affinities” (170). The missionaries’ effort in establishing the language of the main village as the language of the translated Bible helped in the formation of a lingua franca. Before that, each village had their own language and was quite unintelligible to other villages. In this connection, Sanjib Baruah has written: “The single most important development that made the imagining of the Nagas as a collectivity possible was their conversion to Christianity....Today Christianity is an essential part of Naga identity...If the Naga conversion to Christianity was the result of their incorporation into a larger political, economic, and cultural universe, so was their journey on the road to nationhood” (248-249).

According to Lintner, even tribal designations like Angami, Ao, Sema, Rengma, Lotha, Konyak and Tankhul came to be with the arrival of Christianity in the late nineteenth century(52-53). This pre-colonial diversity is also clearly stated in the 1929 memorandum, already mentioned earlier, by the Naga Club, submitted to E. Cadogan, a member of the Simon Commission.

Some 4000 Nagas were recruited for the Labour Corps in France between 1916 and 1917 to participate in First World War. When these veterans returned to their homeland they decided to form an association encompassing all the tribes. This club was called the Naga Club. It was, not a political party and it was also not opposed to the British rule. However, it became the origin of the Naga nationalism and in 1929 it submitted the memorandum mentioned above.

In April 1945 the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was established by C.R Pawsey, the then deputy commissioner of the Naga Hills. The institution then changed its name to the Naga National Council (NNC) in February 1946 consisting of twenty nine members representing the

different tribes. Its main aim and policy was to safeguard Nagas' interest after the independence of India from the British. In June 1946 the NNC submitted a four-point memorandum to the British Cabinet Mission:

1. This Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of all Naga tribes, including those in the unadministered areas;
2. This Council strongly protests against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;
3. The Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam, in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas;
4. The Naga tribes should have a separate electorate. (as qtd in Lintner 65)

On 21 May 1947, the NNC issued a statement stating their lack of desire to be a part of the new Indian state. In June, Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor Assam, had a negotiation in Kohima with the NNC in which the NNC declared their rejection of a constitution drawn by people who are basically ignorant about Nagaland and the Naga people. The discussion however, managed to strike up what is now called the nine-point agreement in which the Nagas will be a part of India for ten years after which the NNC would be consulted as to how should things proceed after the trial period. However, on 14 September 1947, a day before the independence of India, the NNC declared the independence of Nagaland. All Indian flags hoisted on 15 August in the populated areas of Nagaland were taken down by local people (Lintner 62).

The fundamental core of the Naga's cause i.e. a separate Naga Nationhood gained momentum in the 1950s. In April 1950 Angami Zapu Phizo went to Delhi and met the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru and pleaded his case. Nehru's reply, however, was one

of disappointment for Phizo as he completely rejected an independent Naga nation and even stated that such independence would lead to the downfall of the Nagas themselves (Lintner 70).

The NNC organized a Plebiscite in 1951 in which, according to the NNC, 99.99 percent of the Naga population voted for a sovereign Nagaland. A non violent civil disobedience movement was organized in 1952 by boycotting the first general election of India after Independence. Schools and offices were boycotted and people refused to pay taxes. The NNC also started setting up its own schools.

Mokokchung, now a district in Nagaland, was declared disturbed area by the Indian Government in 1955. In 1956, the entire Naga Hills became disturbed area as the NNC hoisted its national flag, a White Star of David with a red, yellow and green rainbow on a blue background and proclaimed the formation of the 'Federal Government of Nagaland' (Lintner 71-72). According to M.S. Prabhakara, India has done everything it can to deal effectively with it. He writes: "Indian state has always adopted both conventional and highly orthodox ways to tackle every kind of challenge to its authority. In the case of the Naga insurgency, for instance, viewing its convoluted path within the last 41 years or so, every one of the classic 'four fold approach' of ancient Indian state craft- holding talks, offering inducement, creating splits and resorting to coercive force has been selectively employed to tackle the insurgency" (as qtd in Thoring 31). In this connection, S.Thoring argues:

To this classic 'four fold approach' one can also add- a policy of using one ethnic group or the other against the movement, and maneuvering or manipulating media to portray them as terrorists and rebels, and then brand them by different names like terrorists so that they are condemned by the international communities. This will also hide their



human rights violation and contribute to a good image of the country to the world communities, and weaken or destroy the movement externally as well as internally. (31)

Representation is always an enterprise implicit in the agenda of some political power relations as has candidly been exposed by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Drawing from Foucault's notion of discourse and power, Said shows us how discourse is at once self validating and self consolidating and self universalizing. As such the notion of the "maneuvering" or "manipulation" of "media", plays an important part in the construction of the notion of Northeast in general and its highly diverse inhabitants. The media constructed a notion of a tribal community from the Northeast to meet and consolidate the already pre-conceived notions of such in the popular imaginations. The same instance of this can be seen in Said's analysis of the construction of the orient by the occident. Said maintains that the occident already has a preconceive notion of the orient which is constructed and consolidated by occidental discourse on the orient itself, and the occident can never transcend this discourse while dealing with the orient. Said calls this process "synchronic essentialism" (240).

As such, the media, as per Thoring, maneuvered and manipulated by the Indian government becomes a huge negative and exclusionary factor in the construction of identity within the Indian nation-state as well as among the different tribes in the Northeast. In this connection, Asthana and Nirmal have written: "One should be extremely wary of oversimplification in such matters as the media and intelligence agencies have done great disservice to the nation in the context of insurgencies. In the absence of consumers having developed critical faculties either among the people or in the administration, they have thoroughly exploited their penchant for forcing notions convenient to them down the throats of

the citizens of this country. One of the biggest tragedies of insurgencies is that the people of the nation are unaware of the truth about insurgencies” (4).

The Mizos, unlike the Nagas were much more cohesive even before and during the colonial times (Lintner 96). Even though they were living in different villages with their own chiefs, societal structures, festivities, customs, rites and rituals were all the same. And even before the arrival of the British colonialists, the language “Duhlian” or “Dulien” was already quite popular as a result of the Sailo Chief Lallula’s reign. After his death his four sons Lalpuilena, Lal Vunga, Mungpira and Vuta expanded their father’s chiefdom to the North and the East with each of them as different chiefs of different villages. The subjects of these Sailo chiefs have to accept and use the Duhlian language, and as such it became the lingua franca. When the British missionaries arrived, it was relatively easy for them to choose in which language the Bible should be translated and hence further consolidated its popularity (Lintner 96-97).

The Mizo insurgency, like that of the Nagas’, relied and directed its cause on a separate independent nation. Like the Nagas, they claimed a pre-colonial Mizo society which was free from the influence of any political power from outside. But unlike the Nagas, the Mizo movement was borne out of an economic plight in 1958. In 1958, Mizoram was hit by a fifty years cycle of bamboo flowering. This flowering of bamboo led to an increase in rat population that caused severe famine. Anticipating the famine, the Mizo Hills District Council issued a statement to the Assam government on 29 October 1957:

With the flowering of bamboo in Mizo District, the rat population has phenomenally increased and it is feared that in the next year the whole district would be affected. As a

precautionary measure against the imminence of famine, following the flowering of bamboos, the district council feels that the Government be moved to sanction to the Mizo District Council a sum of Rupees Fifteen lakhs, to be expended on a test relief measure for the whole of Mizo District including the Pawi-Lakher region. (as qtd in Lintner 105)

The Assam government's response to the statement was ridicule and mockery. And as a result of this famine an estimated 10,000 people died in 1958-59. The Famine and the Assam government's refusal to act was what gave birth to the MNFF (Mizo National Famine Front) which later became the MNF (Mizo National Front). With the Assam government nowhere to be seen, the local people moved into action, the Mizo Cultural Society, a social club, was converted into the MNFF, a non-governmental famine relief organization. The MNFF, while distributing relief supplies had already started propagating their main cause and belief 'Mizoram for Mizos!'

In 1961, the MNFF finally dropped the word 'famine' from its name and became a full-fledged political party i.e. MNF (Mizo National Front) with Laldenga as its leader. The aim of Laldenga and the MNF was sovereignty for Mizoram, then known as Lushai Hills; unification of all Mizos under one administrative unit and geographical boundary; the social upliftment of the Mizo society and to preserve Christianity. However, neither the MNF nor the MNFF were the firsts to propagate the notion of autonomy and independence. As early as March 1942, the YLA (Young Lushai Association), now known as YMA (Young Mizo Association), had already advocated such notions, right after the fall of Rangoon to the Japanese. It was formed in 1935 under Rev. David Edwards' supervision (Lintner 101). Apart from the YLA, with Lalmawia as its leader, separatist propaganda has already been taken up by the UMFO (United Mizo Freedom Organization) as early as 1947.

Once the MNF was established and functional, it immediately started preparing for a fight to achieve the highest sovereignty for the Lushai Hills. In 1963 the first batch of MNF volunteers crossed over to East Pakistan where they received trainings from the Pakistani army. Twenty two MNF volunteers crossed over to East Pakistan and received training in 1964 and another one hundred and sixty youths did the same in 1966. They also received guns and hand grenades from Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> In October 1965, the MNF submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, a memorandum that stressed the pre-colonial independence of the Mizos and the demographic difference between the Mizos and the rest of India. The memorandum also highlighted the separation and divisions of the Mizo 'country' (Zama 11).

However, the memorandum was not taken seriously, and on 3 March 1966 "Mizo freedom fighters began their first major attack on the Assam Rifles, they opened fire on their stronghold located in the centre of Aizawl town. No sooner did Mizoram freedom fighters opened fire on their camp than the Assam Rifles returned with heavy fires and thus began the war of independence to flare up for years to come" (Zama 31). The 'freedom' movement lasted for twenty years and finally ended when the Mizo Peace Accord was signed on 30 June 1986.

Manipur, unlike Nagaland and Mizoram does not have to make conjectures about their ethnic past. As per the Manipuri Royal Chronicles, an independent Manipur kingdom had already been established long ago. The Chronicles recorded an invasion by the Chinese in thirteenth century. Between 1709-48 the Manipuri kingdom under Maharaja Pamheiba, also known as Garibnawaz, extended. He was an ardent believer of Hinduism, and from then onwards, the Meiteis embraced Hinduism. In the early nineteenth century, the Manipuri kingdom, along with Assam was subjugated by the Burmese kingdom. The Burmese, however,

were finally defeated by Gambhir Singh with the support of the British. On 26 September 1826, a treaty was signed between the Burmese and the British in Yandabo. After the treaty was signed, Assam became part of the British Empire and Manipur regained independence. The Manipur king returned to his kingdom along with many of his subjects, but on the condition that a political agent of the British be placed in Imphal. On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1891, the British political agent Mr. Grimwood and the Chief Commissioner were killed by the Manipuris on charges of attempting to capture Yuvaraj Tikendrajit and to dethrone the Manipuri king. This led to the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891, after that the Manipuri Kingdom came under the British Empire.

With the independence of India on 15 August 1947, the then Maharaja Bodhachandra Singh wanted and attempted to establish a constitutional monarchy. However he was summoned by India's Home Minister Sardar Patel to Shillong and was told that he had no other alternative but to join India. On 21 September 1949, Bodhachandra signed an agreement that merged Manipur with India. It was made a Union Territory in 1957 and into a full-fledged state in 1972. The idea of merging with India was not supported by a very large segment of the population, and it was the people, rather than the royals, who opposed the accession.

In 1964 a resistance organization, the UNLF (United National Liberation Front) was founded. Its aim was "not only an independent, socialist republic in Manipur but also that it had a historic mission to liberate Manipur from Indian colonial occupation in the larger context of liberating the entire Indo-Burma region, for a common future" (as qtd in Lintner 146-147). In 1968 the RGM (Revolutionary Government of Manipur) was founded by the former UNLF foreign secretary Oinam Shudir Kumar. It was a faction that broke away from the UNLF. And, in 1976 Nameirakpam Bisheswar Singh along with 18 other men went to China and received

military and political training, and on 25th September 1978 he founded the PLA (People's Liberation Army). In order to consolidate itself politically, it even created a political wing, the Revolutionary People's Front on 25 February 1979. However, their Marxist oeuvre was not too appealing to the people as Bertil Lintner explains:

It was in many ways easier for ordinary people to relate to the Manipuri revolutionaries in their turf than the Naxalites in their area of operation. The UNLF and the PLA fought not only for what they believe was 'social justice' in the shape of socialism, but also for 'their country'. Nationalism, even if it is separatism, is often a stronger force than pure ideology and the belief in complex political theories. Many Manipuris think that their Maharaja had been tricked and forced to join India in 1949. Because of their distinct ethnic identity, they continue to feel that they should not belong to India either. Independence and socialism would deliver them from the evils of the oppressive Indian state and restore their national pride. (156)

1977 saw the emergence of yet another Marxist organization PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak). It split into several smaller factions. Kangleipak is an ancient name of Manipur before the arrival of Hinduism. The difference of the Naga and the Mizo insurgents from that of insurgents of Manipur is that the Nagas and the Mizos fought to protect their homeland and built an independent nation-state (Lintner 163). As Biswas and Suklabaidya denotes:

The claims of Naga nationhood, undercutting the superiority of the Indian nationhood, itself back at a locale that establishes its distinctiveness. The play of primary tribal and secondary pan-tribal identity with a shared communicative context of habitat and identity

contains within itself the recognition of its smaller faction by 'their internal Other' in order to emerge into an unified identity that occupies a larger space. In the case of Mizo identity, a narrative reconstruction of the linkages existent among various small clans is conducted in order to emerge into a larger whole of the Zo family. This process of ethnic formation imbues a sense of unity in a cumulative way in order to reinforce a certain shared cultural traits to present a consolidated block of identity in the face of collaboration and conflict with a larger dominant identity...These processes of ethnic formation never move beyond 'their self-defined interior' and, therefore, respond to the process of subjugation by consolidating their interior. (157-158)

Whereas the case of Manipur, despite an independent and autonomous history, the people cannot come up with a Manipuri nationhood that encompasses all the communities the state. According to Sajjad Hassan, this is due to the fragmentation of state power in Manipur (300). According to him, the end of colonialism and the independence of India were immediately followed in Manipur by an intense struggle for power between the nobility, the ruled in the valley as well as the tribal communities in the hills. The elite came out on top, and that according to Hassan proved detrimental. He argued that the elite were unable to come up with an inclusive political program that could have encompassed all the communities. It led to the alienation of minor tribal communities in the state. This resulted in an "intergroup contest over power, resources and symbols between hill and valley groups and amongst the hill groups themselves using the ethnic principles. This had severe consequences for the state's already fragmented social structure" (301-302).

On the geopolitical structure of Northeast, Subir Baumik, in his book *Troubled Periphery* echoes the same argument made by Manjeet Baruah earlier that the Northeast frontier was a colonial invention and was never part of any political state. He has substantiated the claims of separateness from India in the pre-colonial past. He writes: “India’s North East is a British imperial construct subsequently accepted by the post-colonial nation-state. It emerged in British colonial discourse as a frontier region, initially connoting the long swathe of mountains, jungles and riverine, tropical marshy flatlands located between the eastern limits of British-ruled Bengal and the western borders of the Kingdom of Ava (Burma)” (4). The imperative notion to reclaim pre-colonial independence and freedom is present in most of the insurgencies in Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. The ubiquitous absence of India during the pre-colonial times and its minimal presence during the colonial period and then its sudden appearance in the post-colonial era in terms of geography, politics and in terms of identity formation cause uneasiness among the different tribes of the Northeast. A community, as per Patricia Mukhim, “is a social entity that endures over time; Continuity is ensured by passing down shared traditions, customs, language and social norms or culture from generation to generation. Communities are therefore identified by continuity, cohesion, boundedness and adherence to tradition. The specific cultures of communities provide the basis for the identity of individual members as well as their primary social context. Culture is therefore the intrinsic element for identification of each tribal community” (183). In this connection, Biswas and Suklabaidya have written:

The phenomenal rise and growth of various identities in North-East India presents a picture of the possibilities of multiple emergences of identities with many distinct claims. However, the Indian State uses its ideological and repressive organs to simultaneously persuade these identities to join the Indian mainstream and coerce them into submission.



In response to such a two-pronged strategy of the Indian State, ...identities from North-East India bring up their own insurgent groups; and such groups take the lead voicing the identity concerns of their respective ethnic communities. (12)

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Spivak voices her concern over the fact that even the most noble of intentions that seek to speak up on behalf of the voiceless could repeat the very silence that they seek to voice or represent. She further argues that the "subaltern" always stands in an ambiguous relation to power- it is always subordinate to it but never fully consenting to its rule (25). She is convinced that the subaltern cannot speak. If the subaltern cannot speak, what can they do?

Aside from the subaltern being unable to speak, another important noteworthy instance on this issue is that of the militaristic approach of the Indian state to deal with the Northeast region. The enforcement of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, a repressive state apparatus, is a major hindrance to a more pacifistic relational establishment between the two as this act inevitably gives rise to anti-India sentiments. The French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" identifies two kinds of apparatuses by which the state exercises its domination over the public. They are ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) and RSA (Repressive State Apparatus). ISA is an apparatus by which the state maintains control over the people by propagating ideology through institutions such as family, school, media etc. These institutions are used to strengthen the government by interpellating the people to succumb to the ideology of the establishment. This takes us back to Biswas and Suklabaidya and their argument that "the Indian State uses its ideological and repressive organs to simultaneously persuade these identities to join the Indian mainstream and

coerce them into submission” (12). An ISA is the means by which the state forms an image of the Northeast on the general population, while in the Northeast, it employs the RSA through various means like the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 (henceforth AFSPA) to maintain its control over the region. In the face of such oppression, Thoring likens the state of such nations to colonialism:

These imply that ethnic entities are nation-states within a nation state and they are those nation-states under colonial rule. The newly independent nation states inherited predecessor [sic] colonial boundaries, which enclosed many ethnic entities or nation-states. Those who struggled as nation-state under colonial rule attained independence but now ethnic movements within nation-states, which are inherited from their predecessors are viewed as illegitimate. Further, many other social scientist concluded that ethnic movements are synonymous with the national movement under the colonial rule. However, national movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the middle parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century against colonialism and imperialism were regarded as illegitimate and today they are independent nations. Nevertheless, ethnic movements of today’s world are viewed with misgivings, and regarded as illegitimate genre, though they are the same as the national movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. (30)

However, according to Biswas and Suklabaidya, the function of the state is to indulge in such activities: “The ideology of the state is to manoeuvre, manipulate and manage the consent of civil society in order to subsume the populace and various other institutions under its authority. This mode of functioning make comparatively more or less aggressive, harder and softer, towards a chosen situation. Whenever the normative validity of the nation-from-above is contested by the various identities together, it is interpreted as an undermining of the authority of

the Indian state, which then applies its force to put down such assertions of the various identities. Therefore, the situation can be called as a fight against the Indian state that interrogates the interior of the Indian identity (161).

In the face of such activities of the state through ISA and RSA, what can the subaltern do? What can the silenced communities do to express their plights and articulate themselves? Frantz Fanon, in his famous book, *The Wretched of the Earth* argues that “national liberation”, “national reawakening” and “restoration of the nation to the people” is always a “violent event” (1). He argues that this can only “succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence” (3).

As such insurgency becomes the voice through which the different minority communities in the Northeast articulate their identities and histories. In this connection, Biswas and Suklabaidya have written: “It [insurgency] argues the life world norm of the subordinated to official discourses of anthropology by the state, be it the colonial or post-colonial Indian State, thereby reverting to a subtle discourse of colonial domination, which statist discourse cannot appropriate”(158).

It becomes imperative to understand the concept of the Indian Nation-State along with the notion of identity and notion of spatial boundaries within the framework of this nation-state. On this note, Peter Robb, in his book, *Liberalism, Modernity and the Nation* argues that modern Indian identity is to a great extent a product of colonialism, and even ascribes the emergence of India as a nation state as a consequence of colonialism. He proposes three elements of colonial administration as the governing catalysts for the formation of modern Indian identity. He writes:

The first is the establishment of fixed borders; the second the assertion of undivided jurisdiction or sovereignty within those borders; and the third the assumption of the state responsibility for the well-being of the people in a kind of contract between ruler and ruled...the British supposed that the states ended neatly, preferably at some easily recognizable feature. Within these boundaries were constituted national peoples, in this case termed as a single category, the 'natives of India' or (less frequently) the 'Indians'. (130-131)

He further argues that the nation states in the post-colonial era tend to commit themselves to homogenizing the populace for two reasons: firstly to prove the colonizers wrong that ethnic and cultural diversity are not a hindrance to a nation state, and secondly for national solidarity. This homogenization, in the case of Indian identity formation is explained by Biswas and Suklabaidya in terms of a 'nation from below' and a 'nation from above' in which a nation from below "is the free and undisturbed existence of an identity, however small it may be, and it is not affected by any external pulls and pushes" whereas a nation from above is "...a nation built by the state. We thus, characterize India as a 'state-nation', an inverted form of nationhood in which the birth of a state acted as precursor to the formation of a nation. The state took up the process of building the nation" (159). The Indian state, according to Biswas and Suklabaidya, resorts to both an ideological and a repressive means to subsume and assimilate these smaller communities under the mantle of Indian nationalism, of which they were never a part of. Thus it is an act of "de-contextualizing" and "sacrificing" the "culturally rooted identities of the Northeast" in the form of a "colourless common identity". In the case of the Northeast, this resulted in an aspiration towards "autonomy and independence by going a step further from what carving out of an ethno-based state within the Indian Union can fulfill. The reason is the cultural distinctiveness of many

of the North-Eastern ethnic communities, who have never seen themselves as part of the Indian culture and civilization” (164).

Jaganath Pathy in this regard has written “The formation of the nation-state led to the denial of diversity of cultures and value systems of the peoples, and the creation of a single standardized pattern. The modernization syndrome disregarded the heterogeneity of communities and thereby not only threatened their ecological base but also their cultural viability as groups. In brief, the diversity that should have been preserved and valued has been reduced to a near historical memory under world capitalism” (41). In similar instance, Ashok Kumar Ray explains Indian nationalism and its functions stating that it was an ‘ideological force’ during the freedom struggle but fails in the multi ethnic Northeast. He made several points as to why it failed which included, “Geographical isolation of the northeast, precedence of a state formation process to the nation building process, deficit of bio-politics and dominance of the ‘power-state’ role of the nation state” (52) among other things.

A nation, as per Bluntschli, is, “A union of masses of men of different occupations and social strata in a hereditary society of common spirit, feeling and race, bound together especially by language and customs in a civilisation which gives them a sense of unity and distinction from all foreigners, quite apart from the bond of the state” (as qtd in Asthana & Nirmal 15). And, normally such notion of collectivity or a nation requires and “tends always and irresistibly to reveal its inner and invisible spirit in outward and visible form, and this form is the state” (Asthana & Nirmal 14).

So basically, a nation requires a separate geographical space, namely a state in order to ensure its survival. However, Jaganath Pathy argues that:

...a region is not merely a spatial concept. It is a political phenomenon, determined by the existing power matrix. It is not only an ecological niche, where a community of people manages to survive with its own culture and social organization. The region is not necessarily the cradle of the homeland, or of a given community/sister communities. With the formation of the nation-state, the region came to signify only a province/administrative block in the eyes of the state in terms of certain demographic and linguistic/cultural traits. Nowhere does the region incorporate a region's other traits, like its unique history, culture and social formation. It is simply a politico-administrative unit, whose continued survival is dictated by the power matrix within which it is located. (33)

In sharp contrast to this spatial notion of the state by an already existing state, the political premise that governs civilization today has to be geopolitical boundaries. As Jafa, while talking about the grouping of villages in Mizoram, points out: "All tribal societies are kinship based, with strong ties to the land that . . . contains their history and sense of identity. The people are part of a habitat, and the hills, rivers, paths, trees, and woodlands establish a living pattern which is passed from generation to generation and become the essence of tribal life, music, arts, crafts and agriculture." (as qtd in Lintner 94). In this connection, Asthana and Nirmal writes, "In the vocabulary of the revolutionary agitation, the word 'nationality'(nationalite, nationalitat) designated any community in which or for which independent and autonomous government was insistently demanded...subsequently a distinction was made between 'natural' and 'political' nationality. Race and language were held to determine natural nationality, while the political species as that which prevailed where a lesser one was absorbed by a greater people through the exertion of either moral or physical force" (15). And, as such, when smaller ethnic nations with a history steeped in independence and freedom are unable to articulate themselves under an

overwhelming foreign nation, or voice their concerns at the national macro political level, they resort to insurgency to resist such uncompromising notion of a nation, as Biswas and Suklabaidya, yet again write:

The thematic of insurgency in the North-East is the recovery of a lost terrain, and the reconstruction of a legitimate and autonomous identity. This thematic of insurgency is, in fact, a counter-thematic to the dominant national imagery of the celebration of 'nationhood'... Various insurgency movements of the North-East, such as Naga, Mizo and Assamese national struggles, have identified the 'Indian State' as their common enemy and undercut the claim of Indian national identity.(154)

Thus, insurgency becomes a process of articulation or rather the narration of one's own authenticity. Sukalpa Bhattacharjee, in this regard, says: "Narratives are expressions and representations of lived experiences even though they may not actually have lived" (245). It is a way of establishing and consolidating one's claim to nationhood. Insurgent groups draw from pre-colonial holistic past – a unique independent nation, as Patricia Mukhim argues that "there is an abiding interest among the tribes to go back to the past and reconnect with their roots. Surprisingly, this is the aspiration of the educated tribal elite, and has a very strong political connotation which betrays their desire for appropriating more powers from informal sources within the system. The new political elite never tire of going back to history and tradition when it suits them. And all of them base their arguments on historical records" (183). The cause, then, becomes the preservation of such nation and the reclamation of its earlier state – independence and freedom. And when one is absolutely voiceless to articulate its causes and identity, it resorts to the only means available: violence, and hence insurgency. Michel Foucault argues that

“Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy” (101-102). The marginalization of the Northeast has rendered the region a visibility and voice through insurgency. It has become one of the many voices through which the marginalized have spoken out their political aspirations.

Edward Said denotes in *Culture and Imperialism* that “nations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism and constitute one of the main connections between them” (xiii). As such, in the case of Northeast India, the act of insurgency becomes a technique through which identities and nationhood are articulated and consolidated, as it were, narrated by centering their entire struggle to the aspiration of achieving independence – which is also the reclamation of their earlier mode of pre-colonial existence. In stark reality, independence, for these tribal nations is only a utopia, but in spite of the impossibility of achieving such aspiration, the insurgents and “their underground activities have kept alive the sensibilities of independence, to write the biography of the nation by a reengagement with past imagery and its present contours” (Biswas and Suklabaidya 174). As it were, insurgency becomes a unifying factor in the construction of nationhood, in this connection, Sanjib Baruah has written, “The Naga conflict help make Christianity a part of Naga identity. It is not accidental that nearly half of the conversion among Naga happened after India’s independence. The Christian identity which marks the Nagas apart from the mostly Hindu and Muslim population of the Indian Heartland has been partly an act of cultural resistance that paralleled the political and armed resistance” (248-249). In similar fashion, Subir Bhaumik has written:



In recent decades, groups of tribes emerged into generic identities like the Nagas and the Mizos. As they challenged their incorporation into India and launched vigorous separatist campaigns, they began to evolve into nationalities. The presence of a common enemy—India—often generated a degree of cohesiveness and a sense of shared destiny within these generic identities. For instance, the Naga's self-perception of a national identity was manifested in the emergence of the Naga National Council (NNC) as the spearhead of the separatist movement and Nagas continue to describe their guerrillas as 'national workers'". (2)

Thus, in Northeast, insurgencies themselves engendered the support of their respective people, as they are the political act actions that encompass both their past and their present political conditions.

The aspirations of the insurgent groups to achieve independence is directly rooted in their pre-colonial past when they were free and not subjected to foreign powers – thus creating a pan ethnic identity that transcends their sub tribes and clans. Instead of being subsumed into the Indian Nation-state, the insurgents and peoples of Northeast are engaging in what Charles Taylor has called “the politics of recognition”, which means, “Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover”(31). Taylor insinuates that the same process is the case with that of a group. What this argument implicates is that the subaltern or minority, be it an individual or a group will now be able to construct themselves. In the case of Northeast, articulation and discoveries of identity are done through insurgency. Thus, insurgency in the Northeast in general and in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in particular, is the political act that undertakes the narration of the nationhood of the communities that are politically, culturally and geographically homogenized.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For further details on the facts and figures with regards to the MNF's training activities, see Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East: India, China and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier*.

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## Chapter III

### **Insurgency and its Effects on the Mizo, Naga and Manipuri Society**

Most of the states in Northeast, and particularly Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland all have, at one point of time, experienced insurgency. It thus becomes a shared history of the region. As such, this chapter attempts to elucidate insurgencies in Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur, as they are presented in the works of Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's *Love in the Times of Insurgency* and Keisam Priyokumar's "Moon and Rahu", "The Rains did not Come" and "One Night".

Fiction, unlike historiography, relies on narrative technique that enables it to tell and communicate aspects of history that are left out in the official records. It directly portrays facets of history and events such as the ethos, the sentiment and the experiences that are often left out in historiographical recordings. New historicism is a theory that propounds that we may have access to the facts of the past but these facts do not really tell us the objective account of the past. At the very best, history is always constructed from our interpretation of these facts from our own point of view. In this connection, MS Nagarajan writes:

...all history is narrative written according to the point of view held by the historians. Historians are not aware of their leanings, and do often think that their history is objective. Therefore, historical events cannot be understood as they are represented in the discourse of those who have written them. They carry with them the prevailing ideology of their time. New historicism deconstructs the traditional distinction between history (thought to be factual) and literature (thought to be fictional). History is another text even

as literature is: literature is another cultural artifact, even as history is, and it can tell us something about the social life of the time when they were written. (178)

Hence in this chapter, the aforementioned fictional works will be used to examine insurgencies of the states they portray.

Creative writings coming from the Northeast in general have done so much to bring to light the different aspects of life and experiences of the different tribes of the region especially in relations to the many insurgencies. In this connection Kailash Baral has written that “marginality is the defining trope that signifies this [Northeast] literature’s location” and further argues that “the emerging writers[from Northeast] also collectively represent what could be called the ethos of the region that underscores their shared history and political destiny” (4). These ‘ethos of the region’ and ‘shared history and political destiny’ directly concern the many insurgencies and internecine ethnic conflicts of the region. These fictional works operate as the medium through which the unheard voices and experiences that are often reduced to statistics and data are articulated and portrayed. Tilotoma Misra denotes that this works are imbued with “an intense sense of awareness of the cultural loss and recovery that came with the negotiation with ‘other’ cultures is a current feature of the literatures of the seven north-eastern states. Each small community of linguistic group has responded through its oral or written communication to the encounter with the majoritarian cultures from either mainland India or from outside the borders of the country, in its own distinctive manners” (xiii). These ‘cultural artifacts’ – literary works, have also brought to light the extremity of the violence suffered by the people at the hands of both the Indian Government’s counter insurgency operations as well at the hands of the insurgent outfits.



In *Love in the Time of Insurgency* Bhattacharyya gives us an account of the life of Tangkhul Nagas of Ukhrul, Manipur. It portrays life in the aftermath of the Second World War immediately followed by an ethnic insurgency and their search for identity in a newly independent India. Bhattacharyya gives us a controversial or rather a highly politicized account of the Naga insurgency.

The novel deals with several issues; it opens with Sharengla, a young lass who had lost her chastity to a Japanese soldier, Ishewara. She was then left behind by him to escape from the British soldiers but was later killed in an ambush. Thus, it deals extensively with the plights of women during war and conflicts. It also shows us the clash between tradition represented by the non-Christian Tangkhuls and modernity represented by Christianity and educated youths. Rishang, Sharengla's old lover had fallen in love with Khathingla, the daughter of Ngathingkhui, the headman of the non-Christian village. The Christian and non-Christian lived separately, and Rishang's father, Yangmaso was the headman of the Christian village. Yangmaso and Ngathingkhui had issues with each other basically because of their religion. The same issue is clearly portrayed in the character of Ngazek. Though he was a very conservative man and ardently preaching to the villagers to continue with the traditions and customs of the Naga, his son, an educated young man named Khathing married a Khasi woman.

The genesis of the Naga insurgency is directly dealt with in the novel through Videssellie, a middle aged man from Khonoma village. He was in the INA (Indian National Army) and became a leader who later on propagated for an independent Naga country among his people. He dreamt of establishing a sovereign Naga state, which was vehemently opposed by Rishang and Khathing. The issue of cultural assimilation is touched in the character of Jivan, Videssellie's Assamese brother-in-law who came to Ukhrul as a school teacher during Rishang's absence.

Rishang and Jivan ardently preached and worked against Videssellie's path of violence and independence. Rishang was pro-India and believed in people's rule. Videssellie, for this reason, saw him as a hindrance to his movement and tried to kill him. He managed to kill Jivan. Rishang was also shot on his leg on their way to Phek. In the end Phanitphang, who was Videssellie's accomplice realized his mistake and helped in rescuing Rishang. He, however, was shot dead by Videssellie's men for betraying them before he was transferred to Imphal jail.

Videssellie's character here is no doubt a fictionalized version of the Naga leader Angami Zapu Phizo. This is made clear in the conversation between Videssellie and Phanitphang where Videssellie told Phanitphang about himself: he was born in Khonoma, had resisted the British paramilitary forces, emigrated to Burma, served in the Indian National Army under Subhas Chandra Bose. All these things are taken directly from Phizo's life.

The novel propagates the viewpoint that the common mass was against the Naga national movement through Rishang's preachings to the Naga people. This portrayal of the lack of people's support to the Naga national movement as shown by Bhattacharyya in the novel is in direct contrast to the historical facts. In the plebiscite held in 16 May 1951, a majority of 99.99 percent of the Naga population voted for an independent Nagaland. Nagas are proud of Phizo and the fight for an independent Naga nation. The local people still do not like the presence of the Indian Army and the para-military forces in the area.

The novel reflects the ideas and beliefs of Phizo, leader of the NNC through the character of Videssellie. Videssellie dreamt of liberating the entire Naga Hills to become a new independent country and a new nation, he specifically said to Phanitphang "the nation is greater than a village" (Bhattacharyya 84). 'The nation' here refers to a pan Naga nation, one that transcends

their sub clans and communities. This is clearly shown in the novel when Ngazek, an old conservative Tangkhul man in Ukhrul chose Videssellie, an Angami Naga, to be his “thilakapo” when he dies. A “thilakapo” is basically one that performs the rites and rituals when a person dies. His followers like Ngathingkhui were dumbfounded by his decision, mainly because people from outside one’s village could not be chosen as “thilakapo”, and when confronted with the issue, Ngazek replied: “All Nagas now belong to a single village. Videssellie is a true Naga....I am not talking about his religion but about his qualities. He is a true Naga” (Bhattacharyya 75). Ngazek, who had refused modernity and Christianity to preserve their indigenous traditions, religions, rites and rituals, was willing to break their indigenous tradition, rites and rituals for the sake of a unified independent Naga nation. However, counterpoised to Videssellie and Ngazek were the educated youths like Rishang and Khating. This is clearly shown towards the beginning of the novel in the conversation between Khating and his father Ngazek. When Ngazek expressed the necessity for Naga to unite, and that Videssellie wanted a united and independent Naga nation, Khating replied with contempt saying, “Who does not want to unite? Who does not want to be free? Why should the Nagas not unite with the Meiteis, the Assamese and other Indians? If freedom comes, it can only come through collective effort” (Bhattacharyya 35). Ngazek replied by saying, “We want to live life our way. Not be ruled by foreign ideas” (Bhattacharyya 35), and called their relationship with the missionaries and India as a sort of a mental slavery, saying to Khating, “You see the sahibs [British] laugh at you when you ape them. They don’t consider you their equal. Are you not ashamed of it?” (Bhattacharyya 36). Khating vehemently replied, “Tomorrow I will be their equal in every other thing. We are in a state of becoming...Look, we can be better Naga only by giving up our ways” (Bhattacharyya 36).

Another conversation of this kind can be seen between Rishang and Videssellie. After capturing Rishang, Videssellie expressed his beliefs and causes, saying “I believe that the Nagas are a separate and distinct nation” (Bhattacharyya 202), to which Rishang replied, “You are obsessed with the idea of a separate Naga nation...The Nagas are a distinct group no doubt, but they belong to a great family, I mean the Indian Nation” (Bhattacharyya 203). When the protagonist Rishang was asked whether Nagas are a separate nation, at a meeting in Chingjiroy, he emphatically answered:

No!, the Nagas are as much Indians as the Assamese or Manipuris. We live in a common territory and under the same administration, and share the same economy. Our present and future are bound up with the country as much as our past was. (Bhattacharyya 230)

If the projection of the Nagas as Indians in the novel is subjected to an objective scrutiny in the light of the aforesaid Plebiscite of 1951, Bhattacharyya’s portrayal the Naga educated youths is a contradictory to history. For people like Dr Parag M. Sarma, such fictions do have a covert political intention: “Rishang’s and Jivan’s ideals were the covert strategy of the author to appropriate the Nagas to the nationalistic narrative...what the author was consciously trying to do was to appropriate the Nagas to the emerging parameters of Indian nation” (Sarma 2010).

In this connection, it is to be noted that even the relationship between the two main protagonists, Rishang and Khathingla, are symbolic of the Nagas’ merger into the Indian nationhood. At the beginning of the novel, Bhattacharyya writes, “Rishang’s eyes rested fondly on her. She was a typical Naga Girl, simple, loyal to traditional customs. She was beautiful. And she loved him. Knowing this, he was sure he would in time love her, too” (Bhattacharyya 43). Here, Khathingla is defined as ‘a typical Naga girl’ who is ‘loyal to tradition’ and her father was

the chief of the non Christian section of the community who were considered to be more traditional than the Christian section of the community. Rishang on the other hand was the son of Yangmaso, the head of the Christian section of the community who were considered to be more liberal and were more open to modernity and to India as a whole. Their marriage is the marriage between the docile, ‘primitive’ yet ‘beautiful’ and ‘humane’ Naga and the mature, grown up and powerful India. It is seen as “a triumph” by Rishang who believed in Naga’s merger with India.

In *Love in the Time of Insurgency* one hardly finds instances of hardship caused by the counter insurgency operations of the Indian state. In fact, they were hardly mentioned at all. Vague instances were made. For example, Bhattacharyya described the ‘tension’ in the community after the death of Rishang’s father Yangmaso and before the arrival of Khathingla which was also before his (Rishang) trip to Huining in the following manner:

In the meantime the political situation had become tense. Nights were especially fearful. The village swarmed with soldiers and police. There were incidents almost every night, for Videssellie’s men became active only then. Ukhrul became their favourite haunt. Within two years of the end of World War II, local troubles began to disturb the village.  
(Bhattacharyya 174)

However, these “local troubles” were for the most part disagreement within the community and not between the Nagas and India. The “soldiers and police” here never attacked or tortured the people and the role of such state forces are rarely mentioned in the novel. The lack of normalcy and security in their social life is also seen here and there. Such instance can be seen in the description of Nungbi where the role of police as the state apparatus is just as minimal.

The internal conflict in the community is best reflected in the scene where Rishang, Jivan and some headmen of the Pawi community were heading to their village. Videssellie had given order to his men, Envy, James and Zamphang to kill Rishang and Jivan, and when this information was given to James and Zamphang by Envy, they were dumbstruck and said that “the times have changed for the worse, dividing the tribe” (Bhattacharyya 229). This was followed by the three men shooting at Rishang and his party. Jivan was immediately killed and Rishang was shot on the leg. Another instance of this internal conflict is also portrayed in the end of the novel Where Videssellie ordered his men to kill Phanitphang for betraying them. Phanitphang was Videssellie’s first follower, and yet, when Phanitphang betrayed them and their cause, Videssellie did not hesitate to kill him.

Beautifully written in an exquisite style, *Love in the Time of Insurgency* is an account of life in the immediate fallout of Second World War in Ukhrul, Manipur, which was immediately followed by insurgency. The novel shows an explicit portrayal of how an insurgency can lead to an internal conflict within the community which it tries to protect and promote. As per his preface to *Yaruingam*, the Assamese version of *Love in the Time of Insurgency*, Bhattacharyya declared that his stay with the Tangkhul Nagas for two years as a school teacher was his attempt to understand their culture and way of life. But, as Dr Parag M. Sarma puts it, “he [Bhattacharyya] found it *as difficult as dealing with a stone that can’t be lifted* [emphasis Sarma’s]. Disclaiming that his love for their way of life was a love for *primitiveness* [emphasis Sarma’s], yet he goes on to say that in their *primitiveness* he glimpses constituents of the quest for new life. He says that the Naga too are people, but a different kind of people; beneath the façade of uncompromising iron will lie the beauty of a timeless humaneness” (Sarma 2010). From this perspective, the author’s intention and what he had done in the novel perfectly coheres

with what Temsula Ao has written while highlighting the difference between postcolonial literatures like African and native American literatures and literatures from Northeast India:

...the people of North East India seem to have attained a new 'maturity' in their perceptions about themselves, that the 'other' of their position vis-à-vis mainland India was not 'them' elsewhere but very much within their own sense of isolation in an oral culture. Once articulated through the written text, similarities of world-views with other cultures have helped forged new affinities, and at the same time enable them to accept the differences as only uniqueness of any given culture rather than as denominators of any deficiency or inferiority. (as qtd in Misra xvii)

However, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Spivak voices her concern over the fact that even the most noble of intentions that seek to speak up on behalf of the voiceless could further silence the already silenced. Spivak points out that when the British colonisers prohibited the practice of Sati in India, they were in fact saving Indian women from Indian men. She further argues that the "subaltern" always stands in an ambiguous relation to power- it is always subordinate to it but never fully consenting to its rule. Spivak thinks that it is impossible for today's intellectuals to avoid the same condescension. She is convinced that the subaltern cannot speak. In the case of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, his attempt to speak on the behalf of the Nagas has only managed to hinder their cause and cast even more misconceptions about the entire movement. This takes us to Biswas and Suklabaidya and their argument that "the Indian State uses its ideological and repressive organs to simultaneously persuade these identities to join the Indian mainstream and coerce them into submission" (12).

The stories of Keisham Priyokumar on the other hand are set directly against the backdrop of the insurgency in Manipur. His works cover the trauma, the toll that insurgency and violence have taken on the citizens and community as a whole. They also cover the hardships faced by the citizens from both the insurgent groups as well as from the state security forces functioning under the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, (henceforth AFSPA). This controversial act is one of the most debated and criticized aspects of the counter insurgency operation programs of the Government. It empowers the state security forces enormously to the extent that all judicial activities in the state become dysfunctional. Manipur has been under the AFSPA for more than thirty years and is a highly militarized place in India.

Another huge problem of Manipur is the problem of internecine conflicts between different ethnic groups. Insurgent rebel groups, in order to keep their rebellion going, often resort to extortions which threatens the life of the common people enormously. All these issues are narrated by Keisham Priyokumar in his short stories, "One Night", "Moon and Rahu", and "The Rains did not Come". In "One Night", Priokumar explores the sadness, the grieve, anger, fear and the humanness of human nature in the face of adversity and tragedy caused by inter ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis. It tells the story of two friends, a Naga named Stephen and a Kuki named Lingpao. They worked together in the same office and even shared the same room. An ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis broke out and Lingpao's brother and his wife and son were killed by the Naga community. As Kailash Baral puts it, the night that followed the killing was "one of shared tension and the earlier comradeship shared between the two gets diluted by the recent happenings" (xvi). However, the trust between the two is reawakened after the emotions of anger and suspicion dissipate into a deeper realization of



genuine humanness. Set directly against the backdrop of the Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur, this short story offers us the harsh experiences of such conflicts.

The 1990s saw the rise of ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis of Manipur. At the heart of the problem is the NSCN's Greater Nagaland, or "Nagalim" that calls for the integration of all Naga inhabited areas, which includes the Kuki inhabited areas. The conflict saw 1500 deaths, 7500 injuries and 6000 houses were burnt. 10500 Kukis were displaced and from their original settlement and 2500 Nagas displaced from their original settlements (Singh 185). In "One Night" we are immediately introduced to the intense tension of the night inside the quarter which Lingpao and Stephen shared:

"What if, while asleep, the head was battered with something held in the hand? Or, what if a machete were to hack unawares? Suddenly his eyes and ears were alert. He stared at the opposite bed. Lingpao was lying... Was he still awake? Now Stephen could not close his eyes again. In the faint light of the electric bulb, his eyes swept the blurred objects of the small room...Where was the machete? ...He got into a panic. Looked carefully. Lingpao lying on his bed turned his sleep toward the wall and lay on his side. Stephen who had almost got up did not. He remembered the machete he kept under the bed before. He craned his neck out and looked under the bed. The machete lay untouched, a little further inside. He exhaled a little, but his eyes would not close. (Priyokumar 77)

The entire complexity of an inter-ethnic conflict and violence is captured vividly in this scene. Stephen, being a Naga, fearing that Lingpao might want to take revenge for the demise of his Brother's family, was unable to sleep throughout the night; he even went to the extent of hiding the machete inside the room. The long years of friendship they shared were no longer

strong enough to trust each other. Lingpao's loss and sorrow, on the other hand, are well captured in their conversation after the incident towards the end of the story:

- How long is it before daybreak?

This first sound he heard from Lingpao's lip since yesterday...

Some time left. Couldn't sleep?

How will I?

Only these words. Inside these words, were buried all the fires of his heart

Won't you go to the village later today?

I don't know. How should we go without the armed escort?

Couldn't get the escort yesterday, too?

No. I'm thinking of going by any means today. I want to see Songkhulun, my sister-in-law and my niece before the burial. (Priyokumar 83)

However, the two were able to transcend their anger, fear and distrust by the end of the story and come to their more human sense:

Getting up, he took the broom from one corner and, opening the door, went outside. He gently shut the door behind him...Closing his eyes, Stephen once more tried to sleep. Again he got up swiftly, removed the machete he kept under the bed, and leaned it against the wall in an open space where it could be seen. Then he went back to bed and

lay down...He also seemed to know the answer he would give to the official later in the day. (Priyokumar 83-84)

In this story the author explores and shows us both the ugly facets of an inter ethnic conflict and the human spirit that transcends and rise above hate, anger and fear.

Keisham Priyokumar deals with the same issue in “The Rains did not Come”, but in a much different way. Set against the same backdrop as that of “One Night”, “The Rains did not Come” tells us about a couple -- Lungjahao and Chongnikim. The couple earned their living by felling and selling bamboos. The story opens with Chongnikim lost in reverie and having hallucinations. She constantly saw her dead husband Lungjahao showing her a fish he had caught - she was hallucinating about the day he died. They were felling bamboos; they talked about the late arrival of monsoon and their main buyer Moti, who Chongnikim mentioned, “always comes with the rain” (233). She was suddenly awakened by the sound of the church service:

She woke up with a start as if she had been sleeping all the while. Next the sound of the muffled talk inside the church came to her ears. She envisioned Jesus on the cross, blood oozing out of his head where he had been adorned with a thorny wreath even though she was not inside the church. Manslaughter on the rampage, not sparing women and children, killing at forest sight, houses set ablaze, villagers uprooted, people running here and there to save their lives, no food, no shelter, a nightmare not to be seen, not to be heard, this must be a dream. The death of so many innocent people who occupied only pieces of infertile land in the hills to grow their vegetables – these terrible tales of the hill she could listen too. Terror gripped her whole body listening to them. Who was a sinner

and who was innocent, she had not the slightest power to understand. Her only prayer - Lord, save us from this terrible nightmare in broad day light. (235)

This is a direct reference to the bloody conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis that played out in the 1990s. Priokumar gives us a vivid account of the fear and confusion it had on both the community and at the individual level. Chongnikim continued to have her flashback to the day her husband died; Lungjahao went to fish in the river. Suddenly she was awakened from her reverie by her father-in-law who told her to go to sleep early as the whole village was heading for Leijangphai the next morning. Chongnikim was shocked to hear this, but her father-in-law told her that it had been decided in the church by the villagers. Chongnikim was absolutely hesitant to leave the village as it was the place where her husband, Lungjahao was buried. Her father-in-law explained to her: “There is murder every where every day and whole villages are torched and turned to ashes every day. Can’t be sure there won’t be any attack on us either today or tomorrow. This little village has no means to defend itself...I don’t want the same thing happening to you and the children as it happened to Lungjahao” (238).

If “One Night” was the portrayal of the social effect of the ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis, this is a portrayal of how people are affected physically and materially and even emotionally. Her flash back continued after her conversation with her father-in-law. Lungjahao never came back from his fishing trip and his body was recovered by a group the village’s youth the next day. In the morning the village started their journey to Leijangphai, Chongnikim stood by the grave. She murmured, “I am coming back to you, to the village” (240). Her father-in-law came back and led her along, “Chongnikim took her first step towards the unknown village unwillingly” (240).

Like “One Night”, Priyokumar gives us a vivid account of the hardships of the people that come along with inter-ethnic conflicts in “The Rains did not Come”. It presents the psychological effects of the violence through the character of Chongnikim, who lost her husband. The trauma of the conflict, both on the individual and the community level is explicitly exposed in the physical and social displacement suffered by Chongnikim and her village. Chongnikim lost her husband as a result of the conflict rendering her socially displaced in the traditional patriarchal setup of her community where men take up the mantle of responsibility for their family. The physical displacement is clearly portrayed in the entire village having to move to another village for the sake of their security. The village signifies home and belongingness in terms of emotion and sentiments as aptly shown by Chongnikim’s reluctance to leave her husband’s grave, and also in terms of the fact that all their juridical property are in the village. As such, the displacement suffered by the victims of such conflict is three fold; physical, emotional and juridical displacements. The story reflects the complete lack of civil society and law and order and the collapse of social order.

Shifting tones from inter ethnic conflicts, in “Moon and Rahu” Priyokumar deals directly with the problems and hardships posed by both the insurgent groups themselves and the Government’s security forces who are deployed to maintain law and order. The opening scene sets the tone for the entire story: “As a gun muzzle is abruptly thrust on my back, I feel shocked” (128). Written in a first person narrative, “Moon and Rahu” tells the story of a man, an LDC (Lower Division Clerk) from Imphal posted at Senapati. One night, during an eclipse of a full moon, on their way back to Imphal from work, they were stopped by an insurgent group, who, robbed off everything they had. After the rebels had taken everything, they let the passengers back into the bus. After they were all settled in their seats, the leader of the rebel group then told

them: “We are not looters. Our struggle is to secede from India and attain sovereignty. We are grateful for your aid. Don’t have hard feelings” (Priyokumar 129). The passengers were back on the road later. The bus then stopped at Sekmai Police Station and reported the incident. The police asked them scores of questions, and then tallied the amount of looted money and goods: “Eighty seven thousand, five hundred and seventy five rupees in cash; it comes to more than a lakh if we include other items” (130) reported the officer. When the victims urged them to arrest the rebels, the officer informed them that there had been two bomb blasts in Imphal and they had to wait for instructions.

Dejected by the response of the police, they returned to the bus and continued their journey homeward. By then half of the moon had already been swallowed by Rahu<sup>1</sup>. After travelling for nearly half an hour, they were stopped again by the state’s security forces after crossing Feidinga Bridge. The driver of the bus then informs the passengers that all men in the bus are to come out of the bus. What happened as soon as they got off the bus is aptly presented by the author in his characterization of the security forces:

...being pushed towards the roadside and made to stand prostrate– in a line. I raise my head slightly and stare at the surroundings. The dark soldier standing in front of me jams an intense blow on my forehead. The hand touches thick blood. Tears ooze out of my eyes. I do not understand the reason for the tears. It’s been long since I cried last...Clutched by my hairs, I am pulled up. A torch light is directly cast on my face. I am being interrogated in Hindi....Then his boots once again kicks me again in the head...I can see hazily - the remaining bit of the white moon as Rahu swallows it up. The silvery light has disappeared. Could grandma be standing at the courtyard and shouting, ‘Let go

Grahan, Let go Grahan! Or could she be out on the road holding a burning torch?"(131-32).

Here, the ripe moon and *Rahu*, who is swallowing the moon are very important symbols. In the story Priyokumar explains that the snow white full moon is shining in the sky – with a black spot on its edge. It is because of the *Grahan*<sup>2</sup> – the eclipse of a ripe moon. This manner of the dark sky in an otherwise a beautiful silvery night is referred to the hardships of the people in the time of insurgency:

Grandma! As Rahu begins to swallow up the moon, Grandma worries for the moon. As the silvery light fades out of the night, she would shed tears; she would fast; she would curse Rahu. Now and then, she would yell, "Let go, let go!"... Slowly and gradually, the moon was engulfed in darkness. She would remain indoors. She would only come out at times and shout out at Rahu. Grandma would not witness the earth fading into darkness.(130)

Here the moon resembles both the narrator and the people who are the victims of both the insurgent groups and the security forces. *Rahu* symbolizes both the state - the army and the insurgent groups themselves. The people are torn between the two entities; political citizenship means nothing in their case. It does not protect the people from neither the insurgents nor the state's security forces. And the state does not even bother to act on their behalf. The state's security forces are seen as oppressors at best by the people and the insurgents have also lost all support of the people. An insurgency without the public support is nothing but a burden to the people as Burman puts that "insurgency requires support and sympathy of a sizable section of the population in varying degrees of shifting intensity on some grounds which the concerned

population considers to be rooted in social ethics of one order or the other”. He further argues: “In the absence of modicum of public support insurgencies denigrate into sporadic violence even if for legitimate cause” (1). This lack of support can be seen clearly in the character of the old lady in the bus just after they were robbed off by the rebels. Her anguish, seen as symbolic of the people’s anguish, is thus expressed: “...those rascals, may they die of plague! They have taken away my trade goods. They did not spare even the meager three rupees from my purse. And the begging for apology! This is why the army shoots and kills them often...” (129). Her daughter replied to this by saying, “Many of them, in the name of revolution, are involved in looting and plundering; whether they are the valley-based or the hill-based groups, all are same(129).

In *Who Sings the Nation-State?* Judith Butler posits two kinds of state, or rather give two meanings to the term state, first is “the legal and institutional structure that delimit a certain territory” (3) and a “set of conditions and dispositions that account for the state we are in” (3). She argues that statelessness is a condition of being an “interiorized outside” within the state. She gives, as an example, an illegal refugee deprived of juridical rights and identity i.e. citizenship (16). However, Priyokumar has crudely exposed the frustratingly nullified role of the state in the story; the people are definitely a part of India and have juridical rights and identity as an Indian, but the state of their condition inside the Indian state that has given them such juridical legitimacy is one that resembles statelessness as the state has dismally failed when it comes to upholding and protecting the very rights that it has given to the people. It has participated in the violation of these rights as the story has crudely exposed here. This condition has been clearly defined by Hemo Singh in his book, *Manipur Imbroglia*:

In North-east India, the general public has got a lurking fear for the dark shadow of the insurgents, within the age bracket of 15-50 years, with an AK-47 rifle and with



beautifully typed 'Demand Letters' in their hands...On the other hand, the security forces, with their fingers on the trigger, ready to shoot at sight, presented a frightening equal with the same degree of sense of insecurity as those of insurgents. The civil populace is very clear that the Armed forces are not going to give security measures to them in continuum. Once the Army leaves, the insurgents will fill-up the gap. The writing on the wall is very clear: you cannot believe the insurgents and at the same time you cannot depend on the Security Forces. (223)

Apart from showing us the genesis of the MNF movement, Malsawmi Jacob, in her novel *Zorami* deals with the same thematic concern of displacement such as Village grouping and the burden caused by the MNF insurgent group on its own people. Malsawmi gives a stark portrayal of the MNF insurgency. While Bhattacharyya and Priyokumar deals with issues such as the problem caused by the insurgents, by the Indian army and the problems of inter ethnic conflicts, Malsawmi shows us how the MNF had betrayed their own cause and became a burden and a danger for its own people.

*Zorami* gives us a candid portrayal of the insurgency that began in 1966 and ended in 1986 in Mizoram. Mizoram's insurgency could be attributed to the *Mautam*<sup>3</sup> or rather the flowering of bamboo in 1958. The Mizo District Council did everything it could to warn the then Assam Government of the impending famine. On 29<sup>th</sup> October it issued a statement urging the Assamese Government to sanction fifteen lakhs as a relief measure. However the statement was not only ignored but ridiculed and made fun off by the Assamese officials (Lintner 105). In the novel, Malsawmi portrays the plight as well as the resentment of the people during this time in a conversation between Zorami's parents:

The government is not helping us either. The leaders of Assam know all about the *mautam* and famine but they don't care...They say some people have already died in some far off villages? ... It was a mistake to become part of India. We should have joined Burma instead. India is treating us like a stepson because we are different race. It is nothing to them even if we all die out. They will just come and occupy our land. (38)

This sentiment of the people fed the flame of Mizo nationhood which is seen in the MNF movement as aptly portrayed by Malsawmi Jacob in her *Zorami*. In his speech, Laldenga, the president of the MNF, stressed heavily on the ethnic difference between the Mizos and India as portrayed in the novel. His speech also emphasized on the pre-colonial past of the Mizos that was marked by independence and also stressed heavily on the dangers of being assimilated into a larger foreign nationhood i.e. India. Like the Nagas and the Manipuris, the Mizos too, hold the notion that they were an independent nation until the British conquered and subjugate them.

One of the harshest tactics carried out by the Indian Army was the groupings of villages. "Between 4 January and 23 of February ...45,107 inhabitants of 109 villages were relocated in 18 so called 'group centers'" (Lintner 114). The regrouping were carried out because the army believed that by segregating the people it would be easier to control them, and would also cut off their ties and correspondence with the MNF. Malsawmi gives us a clear picture of such experience in the novel. She writes:

They[soldiers] burned down the houses.... Then they ordered them to move to this new location to become part of a 'grouping center' where three villages were merged into one. People had to live in tiny shacks, made with whatever materials could be found around and put up hurriedly since the fencing work was more important to the new rulers....The

fencing was done in a few days. Then the villagers were not allowed to go outside the boundary without a permit issued by any army authority.... As getting the permit was not easy, it was hardly possible to work in the farms. This meant, their stock of rice from the previous harvest had been charred when their houses went up in flames. Many died of hunger and disease.... Many were tortured to death for breaking the curfew.... And since there was no toilet inside the houses, they had to creep out sometimes. Those who were caught were hung upside down over the latrine pits till they became unconscious. (115-116)

The village regrouping was employed successfully against the communist insurrection in Malaya in 1950. However in the case of the Mizos, it did little to hinder the insurgency and only strengthened the people's hatred of India and the Indian army. The horrendous plight of the people during the regrouping of villages was put into a song titled "Khaw Khawm Hla" which is translated by Malsawmi in the novel.

In *Zorami*, the MNF too often turned on their own people who were seen to be obstacles to the MNF's cause. Such instances can be seen in the execution of Dula, a member of the MNF's army, accused of betraying and giving away information to the Indian army about their battalion captain Thangliana's whereabouts. Thangliana was killed by the Indian army while he was visiting his girlfriend. Dula, who happened to be visiting his sick mother without permission during the incident, was accused by his fellow comrades of betraying and giving information about Thangliana. He was shot by his own comrades without any proper trial.

Malsawmi Jacob gives us a frighteningly uncomfortable image of the MNF in the story of Lalawmpuia. Lalawmpuia, an MNF army was given an order by his superior to assassinate his

uncle who had been critical of the MNF's proneness to violence in his newspaper. Unsurprisingly, Lalawmpuia was unable to see through the mission, and he was ridiculed for it by his fellow insurgents. He was given another task to redeem himself by killing his fellow insurgent Khama, who was accused of being an informer of the Indian army. Though Khama vehemently denied the accusation, still he was prosecuted to be killed, and Lalawmpuia was assigned the task of killing him, in order for him to show his loyalty to the MNF. The tyrannical fashion in which the MNF had conducted itself and how it had strayed away from its original cause is clearly highlighted in the soliloquy of Lalawmpuia:

Is my reluctance to kill due to cowardice? ...No. I am ready to give my life for a worthy cause. But where is the worthy cause? I cannot see the worth of killing my uncle, in cold blood. Shoot an unsuspecting man sitting peacefully in his house from behind! Craven! I enlisted in the MNF to fight for the freedom of my people, not to commit treacherous murders. And what is the connection between these murders and Mizoram's independence? None! ... And now I am required to slaughter at least one Mizo to prove my loyalty to the so called Mizo cause! ...Since I failed with my uncle, it has to be my friend now. Hell! I won't do it! I will not! ... We dreamt of a free Mizoram where people will live in peace. But we're falling into worse and worse bondage! More and more bloodshed. Mizos killing Mizos. Young Patriots ordered to murder one's friends and relatives. At this rate, even if independence were achieved, would it be worth it? Would peace ever come back?" (147-148)

Here Burman's claims that, insurgency often resulted in an all out violence in the absence of public support (21) is clearly substantiated by the MNF's attitude and conduct on its own people and its own members. Malsawmi Jacob puts the very cause of the MNF movement on

trial if it does not hesitate to kill its own people and its own army. The character of Lalawmpuia itself serves as a symbol as to how the MNF should have conducted itself. Unable to commit the crimes bestowed upon him by his superior, he deserted the MNF and in turn was captured by the Indian army. He adamantly refused to give information about his MNF comrades who have betrayed him. He was steadfast and never wavered on his cause. Malsawmi holds up two images in the novel, the images of the MNF and Lalawmpuia. By putting such contrasting images together she manages to portray the true colour of the MNF without ever passing judgment herself.

Another disquieting facet of the insurgency in Mizoram brought to light by Malsawmi Jacob is the issue of the *kawktu*<sup>4</sup>. A *kawktu* is defined by Malsawmi Jacob in the glossary as, “literally, one who points with the finger. Informer” (257). Basically a *kawktu* is an informer during the MNF movement who had forsaken his own people for different reasons. In *Rambuai*<sup>5</sup> *Literature*, Vanchiau categorises three kinds of *kawktu* i.e. ‘*Kawktu A*’, ‘*Kawktu B*’ and ‘*Kawktu C*’. According to him, *Kawktu A* includes those people who have been former undergrounds, however, the reasons for their turning into a *kawktu* could be anything, and some have even been coerced by the Indian army to becoming a *kawktu*, whereas others simply gave up on the MNF’s cause and turned on their own comrades for some benefits.(115-117). Examples of such *kawktu* are presented to us in the novel by Malsawmi Jacob in the character of Ralkapa and Rotluanga. Ralkapa was initially a member of the MNF insurgent; he was captured by the Indian army and in order to save himself he became a *kawktu*, an informer for the Indian army. However, Ralkapa liked to work as an informer and to satisfy his whim:

At first, he was unhappy with his new appointment [as a *kawktu*]. He felt a pang every time he betrayed someone. But gradually, the task became routine, he got used to it and it

stopped troubling his mind. And then they transferred him to Aizawl...and assigned him the task of spying. He would pose as an MNF man fleeing from the army and asked for food and shelter in homes. Whether they helped him or not, any home he had visited was doomed...As people came to understand his game, they began to avoid and isolate him. "They are afraid of me," he thought. The idea gave him a sudden thrill. He now realized what he possessed. Power to kill without using his hands, power to destroy lives. He decides to use that power to his utmost advantage. (Jacob 113-112)

A *kawktu*, as per Vanchiau, out of fear of disappointing the Indian army, often had to point at random on people that he had grudges against when he did not know anyone to point out (115). Another instance of the *kawktu* is seen in the character of Rotluanga, who betrayed his best friend Hmingliana because he jealous of his business i.e. a stationary store. Malsawmi Jacob describes the incident in the novel:

The MNF periodically came to collect donations from both the shops, and neither dared deny them their demands...Then one afternoon, four policemen came to Hmingliana's shop and arrests him. During the interrogation, he at first denied the charges. But the SI said, "Don't bother to tell lies. Your own close friend told us."(117)

As a result of this betrayal, Hmingliana spent four years in Nowgong jail in Assam. Though Rotluanga was not a former MNF member, he committed the atrocious act solely out of jealousy and for his own well being. *Kawktu* were hated by people, and were often assassinated by the MNF. They are regarded by the public as traitors of the nation, and were feared throughout the land.

Literature, both critical and creative, that encompasses this kind of criticism that is equally rigorous and critical of even the MNF and some of the facets of its conducts during the twenty years of insurgency is so rare. Vanchiau, in his book *Rambuai Literature*, has argued that a peace accord was never the cause that the MNF movement was based on. However, by the 1970s, it has become its main concern (2). Similar instance of such account could be seen towards the end of the novel, as the old woman Pi Ramliani said, “We fought for independence, we shouldn’t have given up. Many of our friends gave their lives fighting for independence. We have made their spilt blood to no avail by laying down arms...Laying down arms was a defeat in certain ways” (242).

Malsawmi Jacob’s *Zorami* definitely fall within the category of the *Rambuai* literature genre that incorporates not just the MNF’s narrative but also gives importance to voices and narratives that are not just non MNF but even that are against it . What she illustrates and portrays the MNF movement in a brutally candid manner. *Zorami* is for the most part a chronicle of the ethos and experiences of the twenty years of insurgency in Mizoram. Malsawmi Jacob gives us a very lucid account of the genesis of the MNF movement – the famine of 1958 caused by the flowering of bamboo. In giving us an account of this incident, she simultaneously exposes the attitudes of the Indian stste towards the Mizos. Their negligence of the Mizos in times of their dire plight which is deeply rooted in historical facts, enhanced the sense of alienation. Through her fictional narrative, Jacob has given us an insider’s perspective of Mizo insurgency.

However, it should be noted that, the main driving source of the MNF movement was not the 1958 famine but rather, as always, ethnic nationalism that drew from the pre-colonial past. Unlike Bhattacharyya and Priyokumar, Jacob candidly shows us this aspect of the movement too through the speech of Laldenga that emphasized such issues and the danger of being assimilated

into a larger nation. Jacob, however, does not refrain from exposing the ugly side of the MNF's movement. In fact, she does this elegantly through the character of Lalawmpuia, who deserted the MNF instead of killing his own people. Lalawmpuia is shown as a symbol of truth, dignity and steadfastness as he absolutely refused to betray his MNF colleagues in the face of imprisonment and torture even after they had betrayed him. The character of pi Ramlianai too voices the sentiments and attitudes of many people. She has also shed light on the traumatic experience of village regrouping conducted by the Indian army. In doing so, Jacob focuses more on the brutality and extremity with which the army conducted themselves rather than on the kinds of displacement that Priyokumar has explored in his short stories. Rather, it gives us an account of the inhumane treatment meted out by the Indian army under the mantle of a counterinsurgency strategy. In this sense, both Priyokumar and Jacob have given us an explicit account of the burden and suffering.

Both Priyokumar and Bhattacharya have given us an extensive account of internal conflicts and violence within the Naga and the Manipuri community, however, there is nothing like the *kawktu* that Jacob has brought to light in *Zorami*. One unique feature of insurgency in Mizoram portrayed by Jacob is the case of the '*kawktu*'. The *kawktu* is a highly unique case that is both social and military in its nature. The *kawktu* caused social disharmony and engendered fear psychosis in the people, and is highly detrimental to the healthy existence of a society.

Internal conflicts within a community and also within an insurgent group is a common feature in all the writers. Bhattacharyya has given us an extensive account of how insurgency led to conflicts, violence and killing within a community through the character of Phanitphang killed by Videssellie's men and also Rishang, who was shot in the leg by the same perpetrators. Priyokumar, gives us a unique account of an inter-ethnic conflict and violence that has wreaked



havoc across the land in “The Rains did not Come” and in “One Night”. Manipur has suffered extensively from the AFSPA, and this is clearly explored by Priyokumar in “Moon and Rahu”. In this story Priyokumar has shown us the experience of the people of Manipur who are torn between the whims of the Indian army and the wrath of the rebels, thus, leaving them in a state that resembles statelessness. All the writers have uniformly portrayed and exposed the burden caused by the insurgent groups on their own people. In this connection, Biswas and Suklabaidya denotes: “In response to oppressive organs of the state, identities from Northeast India bring up their own insurgent groups; and such groups take the lead voicing the identity concerns of their respective ethnic communities. As insurgent groups take the decisions of resistance away from the domain of the public, the gulf between the insurgents and its populace widens”(12). Insurgent outfits, in spite of representing their ethnic communities and their claim to nationhood, have become a burden to their own people. Bertil Lintner explains this : “The political ideology of such groups in the initial years, is a long forgotten dream today. The illegal accumulation of huge money has been contributing to the lavish and luxurious lifestyles of the insurgents” (172). This led to not only the loss of support for the insurgent groups by the general public, but has also incited fear in the people.

The three writers explore the breakdown of social and juridical order as the state ceases to carry out its role of protecting its citizens. In doing so, the authors have brought to light the extremity of the sufferings endured by the people as they find themselves caught up between the insurgent groups and the state’s security forces. This is clearly portrayed in Priyokumar’s “Moon and Rahu” where the unnamed narrator is robbed off by an insurgent group and then questioned and tortured by the Indian army all in the span of just a few hours. The extremity of suffering endured in the absence of the state is also clearly exposed through the characters of Lingpao in

“One Night” and Chongnikim in “The Rains did not Come” who have lost members of their family as a result of an inter-ethnic conflict. Lingpao is unable to attend the funeral as a result of the volatility of the whole situation whereas Chongnikim is displaced geographically, socially and emotionally. Thus, she is left with the responsibility of both a father and a mother to her children. When the villagers move to another place for the sake of their security Chongnikim is reluctant because she loves her home, the place where she belongs, and where her late husband has been buried.

In *Who Sings the Nation-State?* Judith Butler writes “...the state is supposed to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship. It is that which forms the conditions under which we are juridically bound. We might expect that the state presupposes modes of juridical belonging...” (3). This function of the state as defined by Butler is largely absent in the case of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland during insurgencies. This nullified condition of state is seen in Malsawmi Jacob’s *Zorami* through the portrayal of the village grouping carried out by the Indian army with extreme brutality. In this case, the people themselves are exploited by the state itself that is supposed to merit juridical belongingness to its citizens. Likewise Lalawmpuia is ordered to kill his uncle and then his comrade by his MNF superiors. Although he does not carry out these orders, the entire incident clearly portrays how the MNF conducted themselves upon its own people which is no better than the Indian army’s. The case of the *kawktu* too, as candidly portrayed by Jacob is a lucid instance of the breakdown of both civil and juridical orders. Similar instance of such incident can be seen in *Love in the Time of Insurgency* through the character of Envy who was ordered by Videssellie to kill Rishang and Jivan.

The use of violence in the manner stated above by the state as well as by its non-state counterparts frequently brings in a condition where the common people do not feel the presence of a state to which they belong. In this regards, Judith Butler argues:

If the state is what ‘binds,’ it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes. If it does the latter, it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e. through ‘letting go’ or ‘setting free’; it expels precisely through the exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prison and, so, in the mode of certain containment we are deposited in a dense situation of military power in which juridical functions become the prerogative of the military.(5)

The states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland have been embroiled in conflicts and violence since the 1950s and have been militarized as a result of the armed rebellions leading to the failure of the state as citizens are torn between the insurgent groups and the Indian army. The insurgents put forward their ideology based on ethnic and historical differences which are antagonistic to Indian nationhood thereby leading to the use of force by the state. However the insurgent groups, as aptly portrayed in the selected texts, have, for the most part, forsaken the causes that have led to their rise.

The three writers, through their fictional narratives, have given us a lucid and explicit account of the ethos and experience of insurgency that would have otherwise been reduced to mere statistics and data. As the famous South American poet Octavio Paz remarked in an interview with the *Paris Review*, “History, you know, is one thing and our lives are something else” (Paz 1991). Bhattacharyya, Priyokumar and Jacob have given us an explicit, valuable and

truthful account of the 'something else', which Paz pointed out, during insurgencies in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Rahu*, in Hindu mythology, is a monster that swallows the moon or the sun during an eclipse. The people in Manipur as a tradition have to cry and shout at *Rahu* to let go the moon from its grasp.

<sup>2</sup> *Grahan*, means eclipse.

<sup>3</sup> *Mautam* in Mizo means the periodic flowering of bamboo that happens in a cycle of fifty years in Mizoram. It increases the population of rats which damage or destroy crops on a large scale. It led to a famine in 1958.

<sup>4</sup> *Kawktu* is the name given to those Mizo people who are working for Indian army. They pointed out MNF sympathizers and reported to the Indian army during the MNF's insurgency. Usually they are masked so that they are not recognized by the people.

<sup>5</sup> *Rambuai* is a Mizo word that literally means 'troubled land'. It is used to refer to the twenty year insurgency in Mizoram i.e 1966-1986.

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## Chapter IV

### **Women and Insurgency**

Women's plight during insurgency has been an aspect that draws academic attentions in recent times. Whether they are actively engaged in the activities of the insurgents or not, they are always at the receiving end of the violent activities of both the state and its non-state counterparts. Rape, physical torture, intimidation, widowhood and social alienation of women during insurgency are quite conspicuous across Northeast. Literary writings from Northeast record such aspects of insurgency which are frequently left unrecorded in the official narratives. However, fictional narratives frequently provide information on such aspects of insurgency while left unrecorded in the official narratives.

Insurgency in the Northeast in general and in the states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in particular is always a violent process which involves the victimization of women. The conditions of women in such conflicts are always worse than the general public, as Preeti Gill writes:

Women experienced war and conflicts in ways that are different to men. They find themselves more vulnerable with greater restrictions placed on their mobility, access to health, education, livelihood, employment, even leisure. Violence is, of course, the "most critical element of disadvantage" that women face in situations of conflict, and there are short-term as well as long-term effects of violence to which women are subjected. While the most obvious impact is physical or sexual violence, the psychological scarring as a result of prolonged exposure to brutality and the restriction placed in a patriarchal society have even greater consequences for their well-being. (215)

In spite of the atrocities suffered by women during such trying times, their plights have been, to a large extent ignored. Most of the sufferings of women during insurgencies are left unaddressed due the patriarchal nature of the societies and are given minimal space in the narration of insurgency by various agencies. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are frequently seen as individual cases that do not merit incorporation into the larger narratives of insurgency. However voices of such silenced women have started appearing in literary texts from the Northeast: “In recent times it is these resistances that have found an outburst through literature and various forms of art” (Dhora and Biswas 16). As such the fictional narratives of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Keisham Priyokumar and Malsawmi Jacob are analysed in this chapter in the light of the characterization of women characters such as Sharengla, Chongnikim and Zorami.

Hayden White explains narrative as the description of our experience of the world through language by providing meaning to the events so narrated. He argues that “the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning [of the historical events] itself” (5). Fictional narrative offers an insight into the lived experience, and sometimes even into the psychic insight of the characters and offers information that are not available via statistics and data – which often tends to silence the plights and voices of women and minority in general. In this connection Daa-dhora and Biswas write:

Down the ages violence from within the four walls of domesticity and the political outskirts terror, has facets that have remained silent or are silenced and buried denying recovery. Literature necessitates the unveiling of those buried past and gives voice to them. Thus literature represents and dramatizes violence that exists and can exist in

different ideological forms. It is language that breaks the incomprehensive character and makes it accessible by the self which was unknown to the world of the other. (22)

*Love in the Time of Insurgency* is a novel by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya that takes us through the battlefields in the China-Burma-India region during the Second World War followed by Naga insurgency. The novel opens with Sharengla, a young woman who had lost her chastity and dignity to a Japanese soldier, Ishewara. She was left behind by him to escape the British soldiers but was later killed in an ambush. The novel is basically her plight that followed after she was left by Ishewara and her search for redemption in a community that has alienated her for her relationship with a Japanese. She is no doubt one of the main characters, a victim of the War. She adopted a child called Koncheng after his parents' death. Jivan, Koncheng's Assamese father came to Ukhrul as a school teacher after the death of his wife, who happened to be Videssellie's sister. Videssellie is the character who had propagated the message of independence for the Naga people and who eventually killed Jivan.

Sharengla, toward the very beginning of the novel said to Rishang, "You have to be a woman to realize what war means" (Bhattacharyya 32). Sharengla was alienated and deprived of her status as a woman in her community after she had lived together with a Japanese soldier Ishewara, who later left her to save his life when the Japanese were defeated by the allied forces in the Second World War. She had lived with a man without being married to him. This man was not just any normal man, but a Japanese soldier. The first instance of her alienation could be seen when Sharengla met Rishang for the first time in the novel:

"Did you live with the Japanese man? His voice was strangely husky.

Sharengla nodded. Overcome by a feeling of shame, she could not look straight at him.

“Ngazek and Ngathingkhui have told me everything,” he said.

“Did they really?”

“Yes. They know your story well” he emphasized the word, story.

“Do they?” she murmured, dangling the bunch of flowers in her hand without looking at him” (Bhattacharyya18-19)

What is even more devastating is the fact that she was now unfit for a proper marriage to any suitable bachelor. This is ascertained by Rishang’s assessment of her life:

Maybe, thought Rishang, she wants me to present the flowers to her or at least them? But she is no longer a virgin, a voice inside him said. She does not deserve these roses. They were meant for a virgin who was meant to be my wife. Sharengla will not be accepted by my society, she is not more than a concubine, ravished by another man. (Bhattacharyya19)

Sharengla is a victim of the cultural norms of her community just as much as she is a victim of the Second World War. Another instance of her social alienation is reflected at the *ngalalong*, a girls’ dormitory. It is a house for virgins. It is also a community education centre to train them into the traditional adult social life of the community. Sharengla was no longer a lady by the traditional standard of the term in the Tangkhul community which required a girl to be virgin until she was married. As such, she was only accepted by the other girls in the *ngalalong* out of necessity: “The girls in the *ngalalong* barely tolerated Sharengla’s presence though, as was the custom, they slept together on the long wooden bedsheet, ate from common plates, worked, gossiped and spent time together. Only Khathingla, Ngathingkhui’s daughter, was kind to her” (

Bhattacharyya 22-23). Her alienation in society is well portrayed in her conversation with Ngathingkhui in the little cottage that Ngathingkhui had led her in:

“...You are as free as they say. You are not bound by the morals of our society”  
Ngathingkhui’s voice was stern.

“Awo, do not humiliate me. Am I not a *naongalava*<sup>1</sup> of the village like Khathingla?”

“But you are a daughter who has gone astray and does not want to be rehabilitated! He laughed half in derision and half in embarrassment. (Bhattacharyya 116)

Sharengla’s plight as portrayed in the novel is not like the usual plight and victimhood suffered by women during war and insurgency. It is never clear as to how she came to live with the Japanese soldier, Ishewara in the first place. In the beginning we are told about their first encounter, which, however does not throw much light as to how they had come to live together. It was just a rainy day. Ishewara had found her all alone in a paddy field and brought her to a cottage and they started living together. Much of their relationship is left to the conjecture of the readers. However it is clear that their relationship was not accepted by the Tangkhul community. We are given another vague instance later when she met Rishang after a very long time. When they were walking together towards the girls’ dormitory, the *ngalalong*, the author says: “This was the first time Sharengla was walking along this lane after she had been abducted” (Bhattacharyya 20). Another instance occurs in a conversation with Rishang, yet again, in which her attitude towards soldiers and war was explained: “Sharengla had seen the army in action and the bitter taste of a soldier’s lust lingered on in her mind. She is convinced that the army used violence and lying as a means to achieve its worldly end” (Bhattacharyya 32).

However, her plight was more because of the social norms of her community rather than directly of the insurgency or war. As presented in the novel, the Tangkhul community of Ukhrul is a close knitted, collectivist community where individual freedom is not given much. Identity and any sense of status for women are all acquired in relations to the community's traditional norms. The community has a preexisting set of norms that laid down the roles and functions of men and women in the society. Outside of that preexisting normative structure a woman basically has no meaning. Simon De Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, pointed out that women are seen as relative beings only in relationship to man in a society shaped by man, and this is especially true for Sharengla both in the literal and the figurative sense. Her relationship with Ishewara, even though it is one that defied the norms of her community, is one where she is not deprived completely of her meaning as a woman and as a human being because she had Ishewara by her side in whose relation she can exist and acquire meaning, albeit a non-traditional one. Hence she pleaded Ishewara not to leave her. The first instance of her realization of what she had lost could be seen after Ishewara left: "The loneliness was unbearable. And her mind turned and turned on her loss of chastity. With that loss she had lost everything"(Bhattacharya 16). Had Ishewara stayed, she would have been just fine even though she had lost her status within her community. So with Ishewara's departure, she literally lost her meaning and status as a person. With this, she had also lost her status as a woman in relation to her community which is a patriarchal one. By breaking the normative patriarchal structure of the Ukhrul, she had been deprived of any meaning and status in terms of gender as well as a member of the community in general. A slightly similar, though not the same condition of women could be seen in *Zorami*. When Zorami's hand was asked for marriage by Lalliansanga, her father insisted her:

“Just say yes. Next time the messengers come I am going to give a positive answer, and don’t dare raise any objections!” her father said gruffly. “You should be only too happy he is willing to marry you, a damaged girl. He is too good for you”. (62)

Sharengla’s condition is perfectly reflected by Preeti Gill in her paper, “Women in the Time of Conflict: The Case of Nagaland”. She writes: “Most women experience a decline in social legitimacy; they find themselves relegated to the fringes of society with no one to care for them or to speak on their behalf” (216).

*Love in the Time of Insurgency*, portrays no direct exploitation of women by the insurgents or the soldiers- Japanese or Indian. Although towards the beginning of the novel we see that the *ngalalong*, the girl’s dormitory has to be guarded by the male villagers due to the heavy presence of the soldiers: “The presence of the soldiers had put an additional burden on them. Armed village boys guarded the village *ngalalong* zealously, escorting the girls when they went out – to fetch water from the stream, collect firewood, to transplant or harvest the paddy fields” (Bhattacharyya 23). However, Bhattacharyya explicitly portrays the internal conflicts and discords of the Tangkhul community and the Nagas in general. So even in the case of women’s plight, symbolized by Sharengla, it was mainly the story of her fall from grace in the eyes of the community. In the end, she found redemption of a sort in Koncheng, the little orphan boy left by Jivan who was killed by Videssellie’s men while he was on a mission with Rishang. She hoped to find in Koncheng the closure that she had lost by taking up the role of motherhood to a male child, a role that would ensure her some meaningful functionality and thus restore a lost status as a mother to her otherwise empty and culturally meaningless life by reclaiming a fragmented status of motherhood by adopting Koncheng.

In “The Rains did not Come”, Chongnikim suffered a slightly similar fate to that of Sharengla in the sense that she lost her husband to an opposing ethnic community. However it should not be concluded that Chongnikim and Sharengla’s conditions are the same. Sharengla’s entire fate was brought upon by the relationship she had with the Japanese soldier against the traditional norms of her community. This then led to her fall from grace losing all her status in her community. Chongnikim on the other hand was happily married to her husband Lungjahao, and when he was killed by the opposing ethnic tribe during an inter-ethnic conflict. Chongnikim was possessed by an absolute sense of loss, not on account of breaches of cultural norms, as is the case with Sharengla, but rather on account of the loss of her husband. Set against the backdrop of the Kuki-Naga conflicts of the 1990s, “The Rains did not Come” tells us about Chongnikim and her husband Lungjahao. The couple earned their living by felling bamboo and then selling them. The story opens with Chongnikim’s hallucinations. She constantly saw in her hallucinations her dead husband Lungjahao showing her a fish he had caught. They were felling bamboos; they talked about their main buyer Moti and the delayed arrival of the rain. She was then suddenly awakened by the sound of the church service, which in no time sent her back in reverie. Suddenly she was awakened from her reverie by her father-in-law who told her to go to sleep early as the whole village was heading for Leijangphai. Chongnikim was shocked to hear this, but her father-in-law told her that it had been decided in the church by the villagers. Chongnikim was absolutely hesitant to leave the village as it was the place where her husband, Lungjahao was buried. Her father-in-law explained to her: “There is murder every where every day and whole villages are torched and turned to ashes every day. Can’t be sure there won’t be any attack on us either today or tomorrow. This little village has no means to defend itself...I don’t want the same thing happening to you and the children as it happened to Lungjahao” (238).



Her hallucinations continued after her conversation with her father-in-law. Lungjahao never came back from his fishing trip and his body was recovered by the village's youth the next day. In the morning the village started their journey to Leijangphai, Chongnikim stood by the grave, Murmured, "I am coming back to you, to the village" (Priyokumar 240). Her father-in-law came back and led her along, "Chongnikim took her first step towards the unknown village unwillingly" (Priyokumar 240).

The trauma of Chongnikim on losing her husband is such that she found herself constantly slipping away from reality to the world of hallucinations, a hallucination in which her husband Lungjahao had now come back from his fishing expedition and showed her the fishes that he had caught. She was constantly unable to differentiate between reality and her wish for her husband to come back to her:

"Chongni, look, large fish, eh?"

Lungjahao stood before her with a big fish in his hands. Chongnikim got a shock. The next instant she saw nothing except the uncontroversial reality of the dark silhouettes of the houses, trees and the sky reaching chiseled mountain tops. Chongnikim looked at her two little children. A few drops of tears trickled down her cheeks unnoticed. She wept. (Priyokumar 229-230)

A woman without a husband and children to feed means hardships and insecurity, physically and mentally. As mentioned before, the story is set against the backdrop of the Naga-Kuki conflict of the 1990s conflict that saw 1500 deaths, 7500 injuries and 6000 houses were burnt. 10500 Kukis were displaced and from their original settlement and 2500 Nagas displaced from their original settlements (Singh 185). A woman without a husband means no protection

from such internecine conflicts and violence that left her vulnerable to subjugation and exploitation. The horror of the conflict was reiterated in the mind of Chongnikim during one of her hallucinations:

She woke up with a start as if she had been sleeping all the while. Next the sound of the muffled talk inside the church came to her ears. She envisioned Jesus on the cross, blood oozing out of his head where he had been adorned with a thorny wreath even though she was not inside the church. Manslaughter on the rampage, not sparing women and children, killing at first sight, houses set ablaze, villagers uprooted, people running here and there to save their lives, no food, no shelter, a nightmare not to be seen, not to be heard, this must be a dream. The death of so many innocent people who occupied only pieces of infertile land in the hills to grow their vegetables – these terrible tales of the hill she could listen too. Terror gripped her whole body listening to them. Who was a sinner and who was innocent, she had not the slightest power to understand. Her only prayer - Lord, save us from this terrible nightmare in broad day light. (Priyokumar 235)

In times of such turmoil, Chongnikim was left to fend for herself. Of course her father in law was there, but he was an old man that can barely fend for himself. Chongnikim clearly portrays the pathetic plights of women during such violent upheaval. There are instances in which women are directly victims of the conflicts as is the case in *Zorami*. However, through Chongnikim, Priyokumar has shown us how women are victims of the violent conflict even when they themselves are not directly the victims.

Priyokumar uses a water imagery to symbolize the misfortune that befell Chongnikim. Even the title of the story “The Rains did not Come” equates the tragedy of Lungjahao with that

of a drought, and is then alluded throughout the whole story, the first instance of this could be seen in the conversation between Chongnikim and her husband Lungjahao:

“He always comes with the rain”

“But the rain hasn’t come”

A couple of days of rain, a couple of days of rain, that was all she required of the rain to do its duty” (233).

Another instance of this could be seen in a conversation between the two, yet again:

“What is the matter with the rain?”

Lungjahao asked Chongnikim

“Indeed, the river is so shrunken”

Chongnikim replied... (Priyokumar 236)

The coming of the rain was eagerly waited for throughout the whole story by Chongnikim. First, the rains would bring Moti, their main buyer, which would relieve them from their financial burden. Secondly the rains would bring life to the crops and the land that had been dry and barren due to the drought. However, the rains that would have brought her relief never came:

The next morning came. Chongnikim put her effects into her *sham*. She put her youngest on top of it, pick-a-back. Her-father-in-law carried the eldest and they started following the motley crowd of refugees. Chongnikim did not start immediately. She stood by the grave for some time. She murmured – ‘I am coming back to you, to the village.’ A few drops of tears slithered down her cheeks, then fell unchecked. She remembered the

bundles of bamboos by the Barak river. The rains did not come – the rain that would have cooled her mind, greened the hills. Now, of what use is the rain. (Priyokumar 240)

Aside from the emotional trauma of losing one's spouse, the death of her husband has rendered her helpless both socially and economically. With the death of her husband she now had to take up the social responsibility of her husband, and in a patriarchal society shaped and monopolized by men the entire communal structure will always be biased towards her. Economically, her position is clearly delineated by Preeti Gill: "Since they form the bulk of the unemployed and the uneducated, women find themselves ill-equipped to take on the burden of the household and as a result become completely poverty stricken" (216).

Malsawmi Jacob uses the same water imagery in her novel *Zorami*, and equates the tragedies that befell the protagonist Zorami with drought, though the equation is done in more subtle way than Priyokumar. In "The Rains did not Come" Priyokumar shows us a facet of victimhood that we've never considered before. By losing her husband, Chongnikim had lost everything that she had, and the trauma of losing Lungjahao had made her insecure in terms of her protection against raiding enemy tribe as well as in terms of taking care and feeding and earning ones living and providing for the family, and taking care of two children. Similar instance of such concerns are also highlighted in Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami*: "Besides, during *rambuai* a large number of men were killed. Many widows had to bring up their children alone. They had to work outside the home to earn a living. The children were left on their own without a parent to attend to them or instruct them in daily living" (Jacob 228). In this connection, Preeti Gill writes:

Young widows are forced to head households even though in a patriarchal feudal set-up they have little or no access to land and property. Interviews have shown that during and in the aftermath of violence and conflict there is an increase in female-headed households as many men were killed in encounters on raids, or have simply 'disappeared'. In most tribal societies, the economic burden is generally considered the sole responsibility of women. For this reason, perhaps, women get very little help from their own menfolk; or from the state, in the reconstruction of lives after conflict. (216)

Added to these burdens is the emotional trauma of losing one's partner or spouse, and we see Chongnikim losing grip of reality, and failing to differentiate between reality and her longings. A woman without her husband is anything but a normal human being with a proper status. Through "The Rains did not Come" Priyokumar has given us a lucid portrayal of a certain facet of the state of women that has hitherto been explored either in fiction or historiographical records, during the Naga-Kuki conflicts of the 1990s. Priyokumar tells us how the victimhood of women extends way beyond such instances of women being directly physically exploited.

In *Zorami*, set during the armed struggle for independence by Mizo National Front in Mizoram, Malsawmi Jacob tells us the story of an innocent girl Zorami. She was violated as a young teenager, at the age of thirteen to be precise, by an Indian army man. This violation by the army man had consequences both in her psychological state and in her marriage with Sanga as well. Faced with the overwhelming brutality of the insurgency, the Mizo people suffered immensely from both Indian army and also from the MNF themselves. The social and psychological effects were immense. Lives were lost; families and entire villages were displaced. *Zorami* explores these issues and in doing so gives a vivid portrayal of the spirit of the Mizos and their capacity for endurance and perseverance.

The plight of the main protagonist Zorami could be symbolized and equated to the plight of the Mizos in general. Zorami was raped by an Indian army man when she was just thirteen year old. In sharing the same name as that of Mizoram she symbolizes the state and its people. It is no mistake that the protagonist is a girl and is named Zorami. The sufferings of Zormi in the novel are symbolic of the sufferings of the Mizo people at the hands of the Indian army who were enforced by the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958. Both Zorami and her state, Mizoram, have suffered severely from the Indian army. Such instance of the army going berserk on innocent civilians could be seen in the novel when the Indian army stormed Darmam village. They burned down all their houses and then ordered them to move to a new location to become part of a grouping centre. Nine people were arrested in the process including a woman school teacher who was never seen again after her arrest. In this connection, Daa-dhora and Biswas argues:

the Indian army themselves characterize and symbolize patriarchy itself, and Mizoram and its people the exploited female dominated and subjugated by the male; The army becomes the symbol of patriarchy and power exerting its pressures on the women both as subject and object. The masculinity aggression and chauvinism is on display and exercise in the form of violence where women are the targets. Women and their bodies become the principle sites of writing violence...The lawfully deployed army thus indulges in the practice of dominant misogynist values of Indian patriarchy. (17)

The use of water imagery, just as Priyokumar did in “the Rains did not Come”, could be seen throughout the story. The story begins with a near drought situation and the people waiting for rain. The same situation was the case that led to the personal tragedy of Zorami. She was fetching water from a barely flowing spring. It was a drought and the spring was small trickle.

As such it took a long time to fill her tin. She was waiting for her tin to be full. She was alone as she was the last in the queue and it was starting to get dark. She was then raped by the Indian army. The psychological effects of this experience are seen throughout the novel; the trauma which she herself described right after the incident;

“I am beyond help. Too torn up. Too far gone. Why didn’t you come before? It’s too late now. I’ve been robbed of everything”...She reviles him. She spews out obscenities and black snakes...”I am already dead. My brain still thinks, my lungs still breathe, but my soul is dead. Dead, dead! It’s hopeless!” she screams. “And that monster! I’ll hate him forever. I’d kill him if I could! I curse him from the bottom of my heart!” (249)

Justice Krishna Iyer’s remarked that “When a woman is raped, what is not inflicted is not more physical injury but a deep sense of some deadless sense” (as qtd in Singh) perfectly defines the traumatic experience of Zorami. The non-linear technique of narration employed by the author enables her to present the protagonist as a child and as a grown up mature woman constantly haunted by the ghosts of her past, thus exposing her unsteady emotional state.

Another facet of the MNF movement that has been brought to life by Malsawmi Jacob in the novel is the case of female volunteer (women going underground to fight along the men) in the MNF movement. The issue has been mentioned by C Lalawmpuia Vanchiau in his book *Rambuai Literature* published in 2014. According to Vanchiau the first women volunteer was Sangpuii d/o Darthankima. He also mentions that this facet of insurgency hardly has any exposure even in the MNF narrative (23). In the novel, Malsawmi Jacob deals with the issue in the character of Dinpuii, the former lover of Sanga, Zorami’s husband during their college days. Dinpuii was a college student who was an ardent and an outspoken supporter of the notion of an

independent Mizoram. In the novel, she was left with no other option but to join the MNF movement as she was about to be given away as a MNF sympathizer by the *kawktu* Ralkapa. The MNF's soldiers managed to help her escape before the Indian army stormed her house. After narrowly escaping the Indian army she then joined the MNF and became a volunteered underground herself. However, shortly after she joined the MNF, her camp was attacked by the Indian army and was killed.

This facet of insurgency, according to Vanchiau, is one that is often neglected and ignored even in the MNF narratives. There are even fewer women's narratives (accounts of the insurgency by women) where such plights and contributions of women would have been highlighted (23). Malsawmi Jacobs has given us a lucid and a candid account of all these facets of insurgency. She portrays to the readers the pathetic plights of the people in general, and women in particular, and even highlighted the side of the MNF that has always been ignored and neglected in the MNF's narratives.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Keisham Priyokumar and Malsawmi Jacob have all portrayed these facets of insurgency and war that relates to women, facets that are often ignored and neglected. Through their fictional narratives they have given us a candid portrayal of the experience of women during insurgencies, conflicts and wars. They have exposed the plights and sufferings of women as well as the nature of their victimization. Bhattacharyya and Jacob gives us an explicit account of how women are targeted during times of conflict. Sharengla's relationship with the Japanese soldier Ishewara rendered her socially helpless. Bhattacharyya clearly exposes the pathetic plight of women in a patriarchic collective society where people have meaning and status only in relation to their culture, tradition and community. She symbolizes how the status of women can decline with respect to the community she belongs to



and how they are often pushed to the edge of social norm. For all the efforts that Sharengla put up, she was still considered a fallen woman, who had lost her chastity to a foreign man and as such her dignity and status as a woman, by her community. Zorami on the other hand was raped by an Indian soldier that left her with an emotional and a mental scar that had crippled both her social life and her individual life to such an extent that it even affected her marriage to some extent. Jacob shows us the brutality of insurgency and the plight of women in such hostile situation. She also exposes the low regards that the patriarchal society had for such unfortunate women as Zorami was ridiculed by her own father as he called her how lucky she was to marry her husband as she was “a damaged girl”. She has also shed light on one aspect of insurgency that has been ignored and neglected for the most part, through the story of women insurgents through her character Laldinpuii.

Priyokumar, on the other hand, explores the notion of victimhood itself and shows us how victimhood for women can go way beyond the direct exploitation of women through the character of Chongnikim. Chongnikim lost her husband Lungjahao in an inter-ethnic conflict, which left her with a very bleak future in times of conflict and confusion. The death of her husband has left her socially and economically displaced in a patriarchal society where familial responsibility are usually taken up by man. Aside from the social and economic displacement, she also suffers from both the psychological trauma of losing her husband and the psychological trauma of the conflict that had claimed her husband’s life as she constantly hallucinated her dream of her husband coming home safely from his fishing expedition.

Thus, the suffering of women during times of conflicts and insurgencies, as portrayed in the selected texts, is twofold as they are the victims of the insurgency itself as well as the

patriarchal set up of the societies. It is clearly portrayed in the character of Sharengla in *Love in the Time of Insurgency*, who has lived together with a Japanese soldier who later leaves her.

Sharengla's plight is more with the social norms of her community rather than directly with the insurgency that has followed. As presented in the novel, the Tangkhul community in Ukhrul is a close knitted, collectivist patriarchal community where individual freedom is not given much. Identity and any sense of status for women are all acquired in relations to the traditional practice. The community has a set of norms that prescribes the role and function of man and woman in the society. Outside of that structure a woman basically has no meaning. Her relationship with Ishewara has resulted in the lost of her status as a woman in her patriarchal community. Thus, she gives us a clear instance of Beauvior's argument that for a woman "...the world is defined without reference to her, and its aspect is immutable as far as she is concerned... she can take in society only a place already made for her. She regards the existing state of affairs as something fixed" (330).

Zorami in Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami* too occasionally suffers from the patriarchal attitude of her community. Clear instance of this can be seen when her hand is asked for in marriage. Referring to the fact that she had been rape, her own father says, "You should be only too happy he is willing to marry you, a damaged girl. He is too good for you" (62). However, Zorami does not suffer to the extent that Sharengla does from systematic exploitations. Her suffering is one of psychological trauma as a result of her being raped by an Indian soldier when she was just thirteen years old. This violation by the soldier has consequences in her psychological state that affected her daily social life which reflects what K.C Baral claims: "As a general rule trauma stunts the subject and, sooner or later, brings about disorientation to the subject's existence" (46).

Preeti Gill argues that during insurgencies: “Women find themselves at the receiving end of violence on three fronts: from the state, militants and a corresponding escalation of violence within their own homes” (215). These facets of victimization put forth by Gill have been clearly delineated by Jacob and Bhattacharyya. The character of Chongnikim in “The Rains did not Come” shows a different facet of victimhood that women suffer from. Unlike Sharengla, she is not subjected to any systemic patriarchal coercion and unlike Zorami, she is never physically violated. Yet the trauma she is suffering from is just as bad. She has lost her husband as a result of an inter-ethnic conflict. Elizabeth K. Carll argues that “to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event” (as qtd in Baral “Introduction” 18). This state of condition of trauma is clearly reflected in Chongnikim as she found herself constantly slipping away from reality and going into a state of hallucinations after she has lost her husband. Chongnikim’s character throws light to a side of women’s victimization in times of conflicts in which women are neither physically exploited nor are suffering from a patriarchal system. The loss of her husband alone has rendered her helpless as she is displaced emotionally and geographically - on having to move to another village for the sake of her and her children’s security, and thus, leaving her home that is sentimentally attached to her notion of belongingness, a place where her late husband is buried. She is, as mentioned earlier also socially displaced – on having to assume the familial responsibility of her late husband, and juridically - on having to leave behind her property by law. The character of Chongnikim has shown that the victimhood of women during times of conflicts and violence extends far beyond the direct exploitation of women. Thus the three writers have given us a candid narration of the different facets of the sufferings of women during the times of conflicts.

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## Chapter V

### **Conclusion**

Insurgency for the most part is a guerilla warfare, one that relies on a hit and run tactic rather than a full fledged war. One of its main tactical strategies is to instill fear in the heart and mind of the opposing army's mind and instill confusion and frustration in the minds of the government or the state that it is rebelling against. It has its advantage in its small size and number as it becomes very hard, in terms of both military tactics and policy towards the demands of insurgents, for the state to deal with such situations. Their small size enables them greater mobilization and further enhances their capacity to spread their propaganda. However, insurgency, albeit guerilla warfare and its elusive nature, is still a bloody and violent conflict as can be seen in the cases of the many insurgencies of Northeast. Most states in the Northeast have, more or less, had experienced insurgencies in the past and some are still experiencing even today.

Most of the causes of the many insurgencies in Northeast India have to do with history. The Mizo National Front (1966-1986) argues that Mizos never belonged to any particular nation-state until colonialism held its sway. In this connection, C. Zama has written that "the Mizos had never been under Indian Government and never had any connection with the policies and politics of the various groups of Indian opinion" (12). He even quotes a supposed press statement by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, dated August 19, 1946 that states: "the tribal areas are defined as being those along the frontier of India which are neither part of India nor of Burma, nor of any India(sic) states, nor any foreign powers" (qtd. in Zama 12). Insurgency outfits from states like

Assam, Tripura and the Greater Nagaland movement all have causes that are analogous to that of the MNF movement. The Naga Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) made similar stance as that of the Mizo as they write in their website: “Nagaland (Nagalim) has always been a sovereign nation occupying a compact area of 120,000 sq. km of the Paktai Range in between the longitude 93 degrees E and 97 degrees E and the latitude 23.5 degrees N and 28.3 degrees N” (as qtd in Baruah 241). In terms of chronology, it could be said that it was the Naga that initiated the many insurgency movements with theirs that began in the 1950s. The Nagas were the first to rise up with a narrative of separate and distinct notion of history and identity and a separate notion of nationhood. In this connection, Kumar argues that: “When Nagaland became the 16<sup>th</sup> state of the Indian Union in 1963, it basically became a calling for other states to rise up” (18-20).

In spite of the diversities of ethnic tribes, culture and languages in the Northeast, insurgency has become a shared history of the different tribes of the region. This is clearly reflected in the literatures of the region. In this sense, creative writings, be it poetry or short story or novel, have become one of the main modes or media of communicating the experiences and inner perspectives of the people. It becomes imperative to understand the causes that incited these insurgencies from the history of insurgencies in the states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. It becomes clear that ethnic and cultural identity and a distinct and separate nationhood are at the heart of all their struggles. Even in Manipur, where most of the major outfits are Marxists adherents, this narrative of ethnic and cultural identity and nationhood are still at the heart of their causes. However, considering the improbability of such causes ever coming to fruition, what prompted insurgent groups to take up such actions in the first place? Why do they keep going in the face of such overwhelming odds? India, for the most part, was absent from the different tribes in the Northeast.

India had little or no influence in the construction of the different ethnic and cultural identity during the pre-colonial and colonial times. However, in spite of such history, it suddenly appeared on to the scene in the post-colonial era dictating both the status and future of the different tribal peoples and their lands. In the face of a pan Indian nationhood and identity, it generated a sense of threat and insecurity on the parts of the tribal peoples.

The tribal people voiced their concerns regarding this issue through various memorandum but were not heeded and were ignored for the most part. Facing a threat of assimilation by a larger entity and their concerns and voices ignored, they resorted to the only thing they have left at their disposal i.e. insurgency.

Thus, in the face of an overwhelming coercion into silence and conformity, the tribal peoples of the Northeast used insurgency, violence and guerrilla warfare as media through which they expressed themselves and their respective claims to nationhood. Consequently, the Indian state resorted to even more coercion by means of repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses. Insurgency, thus, becomes the medium through which a nation not only expresses itself but also constructs itself. Once an insurgency strays away from its cause, it loses the support of the people and only adds to the burden of its people.

Insurgency is always a violent conflict. In the case of the Northeast, the violence comes through different media such as counter insurgency by the Government, ethnic conflicts between different tribes, and ideological differences within the insurgent groups which often lead to lynching and assassinations. These aspects of insurgency are thoroughly explored in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya's *Love in the Times of Insurgency*, Keisam Priyokumar's "Moon and Rahu", "The Rains did not Come", "One Night" and Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami*.



*Love in the Time of Insurgency* is an account of life in the immediate fallout of the Second World War in Ukhrul, Manipur, which was immediately followed by the Naga insurgency. The novel has clearly portrayed the gloomy ethos of the situation, and in doing so, shows us an explicit portrayal of how an insurgency can lead to an internecine conflict within the community that it tries to protect and promote. However, Bhattacharyya has taken efforts to paint a picture of the Naga insurgency that is devoid of popular support. This, however, does not cohere with the Naga plebiscite of 1951 in which 99.99% of the population voted for independence. The novel, however, through the characters of Rishang, Videssellie, Phanitphang and Jivan, clearly portrays and exposes the internal conflicts within the Naga community and among the top leaders of the Nagas that often led to brutal and bloody lynching and killing of one another.

Keisham Priyokumar, on the other hand, shows us the extreme brutality of the violence and conflicts of the insurgency and the inter-ethnic conflicts it has engendered, and also the pathetic plight of the people under the insurgent outlaws and the law i.e. the Indian army who have been employed to quell the insurgency and maintain peace and order. “One Night” and “The Rains did not Come” show us the different facets of the brutality of an inter-ethnic conflict. “One Night” explores the sadness, anger and fear in the face of adversity and tragedy caused by the inter-ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis through the two friends Lingpao, a Kuki and Stephen, a Naga, who had been working together and sharing an apartment for years. Whereas in “The Rains did not Come”, Priyokumar gives us a lucid portrayal of the sufferings that come along with inter-ethnic conflicts. It portrays the mental and emotional effects of the violence through the character of Chongnikim, who lost her husband. The Physical and material loss is clearly reflected in the entire village having to move to another village for protection. The

story reflects the complete lack of civil society and law and order. This complete lack of law and order is further explored in “Moon and Rahu” by Priyokumar. However, the tone shifts from inter-ethnic conflict to the dissipation of civil and human rights and the disappearance of law and order under both the insurgent groups and the Indian army. Priyokumar, in “Moon and Rahu” shows the readers that even though the citizens of Manipur are technically under a state, their condition inside the state is analogous to that of statelessness. People suffer from extortion and violence from the insurgent outfits and harassments in the form of outright violence and civil and human rights violation from the agents of the state.

Much of the same issues and many more are explored and portrayed in *Zorami* by Malsawmi Jacob. Besides the portrayal of rape, regrouping of village, burning of entire village, torturing and killing of innocent civilians and many other atrocious acts cleverly recovered from the history of Mizo insurgency, Jacob shows the reader the dark and unrepresented side of the MNF movement. Jacob shows the frightening effects of the MNF movement in the Mizo society and people back then by giving us a vivid portrayal of the *kawktu* (“pointer”). The *kawktu* was one of the most feared and disgusting aspects of the internal discord affected by the MNF movement during its twenty years of insurgency. It causes internal discord, fear and suspicions among the Mizo community. Like Keisham Priyokumar, Malsawmi Jacob clearly portrays how the MNF movement deviated from their main cause and became a burden to its own people.

The three writers also managed to give us a vivid account of the different facets of plight of women during war and insurgency. Bhattacharyya gives us a detailed account of the position of a woman in the Tangkhul community through the character of Sharengla. Sharengla symbolizes the emotional, mental, and physical vulnerability of women during war and insurgency. He also presents the poor and pathetic state of women once she has crossed or

violated the traditional norms by her own consent or by coercion into such state. Keisham Priyokumar on the other hand gives us a sordid account of the status of women in case of an inter-ethnic violent conflict. In the case of Chongnikim, in “The Rains did not Come”, who had lost her husband in an inter-ethnic conflict between the Kukis and the Nagas, Priyokumar gives us a facet of the status of women during such trying times. The condition of women in war without a husband to protect her and feed for her and their children has basically no prospect of any future. Priyokumar shows us how the victimhood of women in violent conflicts can extend way beyond women being directly and physically exploited. Through the character of Chongnikim, who herself was never directly or physically harmed, we see the pathetic plight and condition of women in terms of both their mental and their social condition.

Jacob on the other hand gives the reader a vivid account of the sufferings of women during the MNF movement through the character of Zorami, the protagonist of the novel. Zorami was raped by an Indian soldier in the story when she was just thirteen. This unfortunate incident creates an instability in her mental and emotional life which in turn affects her social life including her marriage. Malsawmi Jacob also gives us an account of the women volunteers who, by and large, have been forgotten by the public and the intelligentsia alike. Through the character of Dinpui in the novel Jacob brings back to light such frequently ignored aspects of insurgency.

Insurgency, in the case of Mizoram and Nagaland “was a fight to ‘protect’ their ‘tribal homelands’” (Lintner 163) whereas many insurgent outfits from Manipur are leftist organizations. However, in spite of their leftist stance, they propagate and “fought not only for what they believe was ‘social justice’ in the shape of socialism, but also for ‘their country’”. Nationalism, even if it is separatism, is often a stronger force than pure ideology and the belief in complex political theories” (Lintner 156).

Insurgency by the minority marks the failure of the ideological apparatuses of the state, and thus, the India Government resorts to more repressive apparatuses in the form of the army and the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958. In the face of such a daunting oppression and coercion through both ISA and RSA, insurgency becomes the voice through which the different minority tribes in the Northeast voice their identities and histories. As such, it becomes necessary to understand the concept of the Indian Nation-State or rather State-Nation, against which the different peoples from the Northeast are rebelling. As per Biswas and Suklabaidya, India, rather than being a nation-state is a state-nation, where the nation is preceded by the state. In such instance, the state took up the responsibility of building up its nation. This had led to the sacrifice and appropriation of culturally rooted identities without recognizing their autonomous existence (159-164). Thus, the tribal minorities of the Northeast region were given symbolic representation and importance in the overall presentation of the pan Indian nationhood while in reality they were reduced to a state of coercion, exploitation and negligence leading to appropriation and assimilation in terms of land and demography without their consent by the Indian state. The negligence of the Mizos by the Assam government during the time of famine caused by the 1958 flowering of bamboo became the alibi for the MNF's freedom struggle for twenty years.

Under such appropriation, exploitation and negligence, the unheard voices and unheeded concerns were substituted with violence and insurgency. In this sense, as Biswas and Suklabaidya denotes, insurgency in Northeast becomes a means of rejection of the dominant pan national narrative. Thus, insurgency serves as a counter narrative to the grand narrative of nationhood that tries to undermine and simply coerce the minority into silence and assimilation (154). As such, insurgency becomes a process through which one's identity is articulated or rather narrated. In this connection, Mark Currie argues that there are two types of arguments with

regards to identity. The first argument is a structuralist view that holds that identity does not reside inside its bearer but is developed in relation to others where identity is acquired in terms of one's difference with respect to that of others. This notion has its root in the structuralist notion of *langue* in which language or rather words have meaning only in relation to their differences with other words within a linguistic structure. The second type of identity according to Currie exists only in narrative and not in the bearer of the identity. This, for one thing means selecting and organizing events and situations in our lives in a proper narrative for "the purposes of self representation; but also that we learn how to self-narrate from outside, from other stories and particularly through the process of self identification with other characters. This gives narration at large the potential to teach us how to conceive of ourselves" (25). In this connection the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor argues that, "Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself" (31). Taylor insinuates that the same process is the case with that of a group or groups. What this argument implicates is that the subaltern or minority, be it an individual or a group, will now be able to construct themselves just as they are or want to be, as the recognition of dignity demands that individual or group specificities be recognized (Taylor 39). In the same vein, Currie puts it, "In more academic contexts, there has been a recognition that narrative is central to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self representation or in collective identities or group based in regions, nations, race or gender" (6). Similarly, Biswas and Suklabaidya, too denotes: "The whole Naga experience of struggle can be described in terms of an experience of denegation- defiance constituted their affirmation" (175). In this sense, insurgency itself serves as a form of narration of the notion of nationhood that has been rejected and silenced by the metanarratives of the pan Indian nationhood. The insurgency,

by drawing directly to a holistic notion of the past that symbolizes freedom, independence, autonomy, sovereignty, and belongings aspires to achieve such lost aspects of their life. In this sense, the support for the insurgent organizations by the general public is always engendered and embedded in the cause that the insurgent groups are fighting for. Thus, insurgency serves as the medium through which these communities narrate and express their identity and the authenticity of such identity. The insurgent groups take up the burden of responsibility of narrating their nationhood through insurgency.

However, it should be noted that insurgency requires the support of its people, and it has the support of its people only so long as it adheres to the cause by which it was initially conceived. Without the support of the general public, insurgency becomes a burden to its own people. Such instance of insurgency and insurgent groups betraying its cause and becoming a burden to its own people is clearly portrayed by Bhattacharyya, Priyokumar and Jacob. In *Love in the Time of Insurgency* Bhattacharyya shows us how insurgent groups often resort to killing its own people who are not sympathetic to their cause. The novel shows its readers the internal discord that often dogged insurgency. Keisham Priyokumar in “Moon and Rahu” shows not just the gross violation of human and civil rights but also the pathetic plight of the civilians as they become the victims of extortion by the insurgent groups. Priyokumar also shrewdly portrays the loss of the general population’s support for these insurgent groups. Malsawmi Jacob too gives a vivid portrayal of how the MNF insurgency deviates from its core values and cause through the character of Lalawmpuia, a volunteer (MNF insurgent) himself who was ordered by his superiors to assassinate his own uncle because he has repeatedly criticized the MNF’s activities in the newspaper. After his failure to carry out his mission, he was given a chance to redeem himself by killing a comrade who had been unconvincingly accused of being an informer by his fellow

insurgents, which prompted Lalawmpuia, a patriot in the truest sense of the term, to desert the MNF.

Keisham Priyokumar and Malsawmi Jacob, for the most part, give us a stark portrayal of the scene and conditions of insurgency and conflicts in their respective states i.e. Manipur and Mizoram without making or passing any comments or judgments themselves. Bhattacharyya, on the other hand, gives us an account of the Naga insurgency in the novel that portrays Phizo and the Naga movement as devoid of any popular support. All the major characters of the novel want to join India and the general public are portrayed as mainly rallying behind the main characters. Gayatri Spivak, in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” argues that even the most noble of intentions that seek to speak up on behalf of the voiceless could repeat the very silence that they seek to voice. She thinks that it is impossible for today’s intellectual to avoid the same condescension, and she is convinced that the subaltern cannot speak. In this way, Bhattacharyya has silenced the larger cause of the Naga movement in his attempt to represent the Naga movement in his novel. However, Bhattacharyya has achieved to show us the dark side of the internal discord of the Naga movement which in history was nothing short of what Bhattacharyya has portrayed in terms of its internal discord.

Insurgency, in spite of being a narrative technique that seeks to narrate and construct the identity and authentic nationhood of the communities that it represents, has now, for the most part lost the general support of its people. In fact it has now become a huge burden for its people as most of the insurgent groups in the region indulge in extortion and tax collection. All these aspects of insurgency have been clearly portrayed and explored by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Keisham Priyokumar and Malsawmi Jacob in their novels and short stories. And as works of fiction, their works offer lots of spaces for the authors to portray and communicate

the lived experience of war and insurgency rather than just recording them as data and statistics. In this regard, they have given us an explicit account of the different facets of women and their experiences of such wars and conflicts. Through these fictional narratives, they have given us the lived experience of the exploitations of women and even the psychological effects of these exploitations on them.

Malsawmi Jacob gives us a sordid account of the most widely suffered form of exploitation suffered by women during times of conflicts i.e. rape. She gives us the full extent of the effect of this rape through her protagonist Zorami who was troubled throughout her entire life dealing with the psychological trauma of rape. Bhattacharyya and Priyokumar on the other hand offer another facet of the victimization of women. Sharengla in *Love in the Times of Insurgency* is a victim of both the war and the traditional norms of the Tangkhul society. Through her character, Bhattacharyya shows how women without a man or rather without a husband in such a patriarchal society can easily lose all her social status. Priyokumar, on the other hand gives us both the trauma of losing one's partner through the character of Chongnikim in his short story "The Rains did not Come". Chongnikim's condition after the death of her husband in an inter-ethnic conflict between the Kukis and the Nagas shows that the victimization of women extends well beyond their direct exploitations. In a patriarchal society, in times conflicts, women without her husband have a very bleak prospect and future. This is clearly and vividly portrayed by Priyokumar.

Hence, insurgency has both served as a medium through which smaller communities express and construct their nationhood and their authenticity in the face of overwhelming threat of assimilations. Even with such noble and pertinent causes, insurgency is still a bloody and violent conflict that has led to the gross violation of both civil and human right from both the



state and their non-state counterpart. It has served as a medium through which the voiceless find their voices. It however has also become a burden for its own people by straying and betraying the values and causes that conceived them in the first place.

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## APPENDICES

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<b>TITLE OF DISSERTATION</b>	<b>: Narrativizing Insurgency: A Study of Selected Fictions on Insurgencies in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland</b>
<b>DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION (Commencement of First Semester)</b>	<b>: 29.07.2015</b>
<b>COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/ DISSERTATION</b>	<b>: 1.1.2016</b>
<b>APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL –</b>	
1. BOS	: 11. 4. 2016
2. SCHOOL BOARD	: 19. 4. 2016
3. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE	: MZU/M.Phil./226 of 19. 04. 2016
4. DUE DATE OF SUBMISSION	: 31.7.2017
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**Abstract**

**Narrativizing Insurgency: A Study of Selected Fictions on  
Insurgencies in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland**

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**MZU/M.Phil./266 of 19.04.2016**

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The Northeast region of India, in terms of geography, is connected to the rest of India through what is known as the 'chicken neck corridor', a stretch of about 22 KM from the Indo-Bangladesh border to the Indo-Bhutan border in the northern part of West Bengal. This stretch constitutes only one percent of the region's boundary. The other ninety nine percent of its boundary is shared with China to the north, Bangladesh to the south-west and Bhutan to the north-west and Myanmar to the east. The region consists of eight states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It has about 475 ethnic groups and sub-groups that actually speak over 400 languages/dialects. The huge demographic diversity of the region is clearly reflected in the fact that the region constitutes over 200 communities out of the 635 tribal communities listed in India, and out of the 325 languages listed by the People of India Project 175 of them that belong to the Tibeto-Burman are spoken in the region (Bhaumik 2). Samir Kumar Das in his work *Governing India's Northeast* writes: "The region, viewed from outside, looks both homogeneous and distinct from the mainland in geographical, economic, cultural and political terms; although, from within it represents one of India's most diverse and heterogeneous of all regions" (2). In terms of area, the region covers over 255,088 km<sup>2</sup> which makes up around 7.7 percent of India's territory. As per the 2001 Census of India, it has over thirty millions in population which constitutes 3.74 % of India's population. The region has been plagued by insurgencies ever since the independence of India in 1947 and have perpetuated till today with no end in sight.

Since the end of the Second World War, the world has seen a proliferation of insurgency. The word "insurgency" is derived from the Latin word 'insurgere' which literally means 'to rise up'. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* it is an attempt to take control of a country by force. It also states that it is synonymous with 'rebellion'.

However, this definition falls short as it confines or rather limits the aims of insurgency to taking control of a country.

In most cases, and specifically in the states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland, an insurgency is an armed uprising, a violent revolution by an armed group or groups to overthrow existing political system of a state. Sometimes it is also an endeavour by the same means, for a secession or in other words, political independence by people with claims to geopolitical territories. It can be found in many parts of the world. Whenever it occurs it always amounts to countless loss of life on both sides: the insurgents and the state. In spite of its ideal aims, it frequently brings countless atrocities upon its own people. Innocent people and common civilians always constitute the majority of the casualty. It brings about economic breakdown and failure in administration. People suffer from both the activities of the insurgent groups and whatever counter-insurgency operations that the existing political power employs.

Northeast India too, as mentioned before, is no exception to all these atrocious phenomena. In fact it has often been called the 'heart of India's insurgency'. Most of the states in the region have undergone an insurgency, and many are still facing it even today. The root cause of these insurgencies becomes a site of contestation.

Jairam Ramesh while addressing this issue sums up the Indian Government's approaches towards the Northeast in four paradigms; the 'exotic cultural paradigm', the "security paradigm", the 'politics paradigm', and the 'development paradigm'. He then continues to argue that the 'development paradigm' which the Government has been relying on since 1980 has not been successful in solving the problems because even after 50 years of this special economic packages most of the region is still in crisis (Ramesh 2005). Sanjib Baruah, too, has written: "While New Delhi expects the magic bullet of development to

eventually come to its rescue, for the moment, in a region that is peripheral to the national imaginary, the costs of letting low-intensity conflicts proliferate and fester are seen as affordable” (3). In sharp contrast to this economic cause put forth by the Government, Manjeet Baruah has written:

If one tries to understand what lies at the core of the historically difficult relationship between the nation state of India and its Northeast frontier, it is imperative to return to the colonial period. One of the distinctive problems that the British faced vis-à-vis the Northeast frontier was how to naturalize a non natural frontier. The Northeast frontier was a colonial invention, since prior to the nineteenth century, it never existed as a frontier to any political state system, whether of South Asia, East Asia or Southeast Asia. In fact it did not exist as a part of a political state of any of the above three geopolitical zones prior to British occupation. (28)

Against the backdrop of such nature, trajectories and contours of insurgencies in the Northeastern states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland, the research examines Malsawmi Jacob’s *Zorami*, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s *Love in the Time of Insurgency* and Keisham Priyokumar’s “One Night”, “The Rains Did Not Come” and “Moon and Rahu” as the thematic concerns of these fictions centre around insurgency.

The legitimacy of fictional narratives as a means to the investigation of historical events is one that has been promoted by critical theories such as new historicism. New Historicism has turned towards fictional narratives to gain knowledge about a particular period of history. As per Hans Barten, “The new historicism is, in the tradition of Foucault, focused on thus far hidden and unsuspected sources of, and vehicles for, power and on the question of how power has worked to suppress or marginalize rival stories and discourses. It has a special interest in the disempowered, the marginalized, those whose voices we



hardly ever, or never, hear” (158). It relies on a, “parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period” (Barry 179). Similarly, this research examines insurgencies in Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur as portrayed in the fictional narratives of the said authors. These fictions, as cultural artefacts in the dispensation of history offers the narrative space for not only just the unheard official political voices and perspective of the insurgent groups and the tribal communities themselves but also offers through their characters, an insight into the lived experience of insurgency and counter-insurgency, thus giving us the true nature of the insurgency beyond their official representations which is, often, reduced to data and statistics. Fictional narratives, unlike historiographical records, offer and portray to the reader the lived, political and social experiences of insurgency and can even offer the psychological contours of the people through its characters. In this connection, Mark Currie has argued that the techniques employed in fictional narratives can hugely influence the reader’s sympathy for characters because it gives us detailed information about them. He writes:

In life, we get this kind of information through intimacy, friendship....In fiction we get it through the narrator, either reliably reported by the narrator or through direct access to the minds of characters.... Information alone cannot elicit a sympathetic response. Sometimes it is the careful control of the flow of information, of where it comes from and how it is presented, which controls a reader’s judgment....” (27-28)

Literature, according to MS Nagarajan, is a cultural artefact (178), these ‘cultural artifacts’ – literary works, in the case of this research- have also brought to light the extremity of the violence suffered by the people at the hands of both the Government’s counter insurgency operations as well at the hands of the insurgent outfits. In this regard, Kailash Baral writes:

Marginality is the defining trope that signifies this [northeast] literature's location as well as reception by mainstream critics.... the writers from Northeast India in their works describe themselves and their cultures, express their views and ideas, feelings and emotions thereby signifying their cultural and ethnic particularity. Although individualistic in approach and narrative style, the emerging writers also collectively represent what could be called the ethos of the region that underscores their shared history and political destiny. (4-5)

Here, 'the ethos of the region', 'shared history' and 'political destiny' are direct references to the many insurgencies of the region and its accompanying violence among others.

The first chapter "Introduction" gives an overview of the proposed research. It highlights the succeeding chapters while giving a brief insight into the life and works of the selected authors. The primary texts selected for the research such as Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami*, Birendra Bhattacharyya's *Love in the Time of Insurgency* and Keisham Priyokumar's "Moon and Rahu", "One Night" and "The Rains did not Come" are highlighted in brief.

The second chapter titled "Insurgency: A Shared History of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland" gives an overview of insurgency as a shared history of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. It examines and critiques the cause of insurgencies in Northeast India in general and in the three states in particular by tracing the history of not just the insurgencies but the history of the insurgent organizations as well. The chapter then examines and revises the concept of insurgency itself in terms of its historical, cultural and geographical location. This chapter also examines the concept of a nation state (India in particular) in order to shed more light on the concept of culture, ethnicity, tribe and identity from the perspectives of both the people of the Northeast region and the Indian state.

Most of the causes of the many insurgencies in Northeast India have to do with history that is steeped in ethnic difference and geographical separateness from the rest of India. Insurgent groups like The Mizo National Front (hereafter MNF) in Mizoram, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) in Nagaland, Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) and the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) in Manipur, to mention just a few, argue that they never belonged to any particular nation state until colonialism held its sway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ubiquitous absence of India during the pre-colonial period and its minimal presence in the colonial period and then its sudden appearance in the post-colonial era in terms of geography, politics and identity formation cause uneasiness among the many different tribes of the Northeast region.

Peter Robb, in his book, *Liberalism, Modernity and the Nation* argues that the nation states in the post-colonial era tend to commit themselves to homogenizing the populace for two reasons; firstly to prove the colonizers wrong that ethnic and cultural diversity are not a hindrance to a nation state, and for national solidarity (132). This homogenization, in the case of Indian identity formation is explained by Biswas and Suklabaidya in terms of a 'nation from below' and a 'nation from above' in which a nation from below "is the free and undisturbed existence of an identity, however small it may be, and it is not affected by any external pulls and pushes" (159) whereas a nation from above is "...a nation built by the state. We thus, characterize India as a 'state-nation', an inverted form of nationhood in which the birth of a state acted as precursor to the formation of a nation. The state took up the process of building the nation" (159). The Indian state, according to Biswas and Suklabaidya, resorts to both an ideological and a repressive means to subsume and assimilate these smaller nations under the mantle of Indian nationalism, of which they were never a part of (159).

In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak argues that the "subaltern" always stands in an ambiguous relation to power - it is always subordinate to it but never fully consenting to its rule(25). She is convinced that the subaltern cannot speak. If the subaltern cannot speak, what can they do?Frantz Fanon, in his book*The Wretched of the Earth*argues that “national liberation”, “national reawakening” and “restoration of the nation to the people” is always a “violent event” (1). He argues that this can only “succeed by resorting to every means, including, of course, violence” (3). In this connection Samir Kumar Das argues: “The violence that insurgency involves is a means of cleansing the insurgent self of the effects of governance—the effects that have been so deeply entrenched in her so much so that they have come to define her very self. Violence, in that sense, is born out governance, but at the same time bears the possibility of turning against its grids and institutions not as an everyday affair but as an ‘event’ as Fanon argues” (19).

As such insurgency becomes the voice through which the different minority communities in the Northeast voice and articulate their identities and histories. In this connection, Biswas and Suklabaidya have written:

...the Indian state uses its ideological and repressive organs to simultaneously persuade these identities to join the Indian mainstream and coerce them into submission. In response to such a two-pronged strategy of the Indian State, various identities reciprocate to the persuasion of the former in terms of insurgency and resistance ... identities from North-East India bring up their own insurgent groups; and such groups take the lead voicing the identity concerns of their respective ethnic communities.” (12)

Thus, insurgency becomes a process of articulation or rather the narration of one’s own identity. It is a way of establishing and consolidating one’s claim to nationhood. Insurgent

groups draw from pre-colonial past – a unique independent nation. When one is absolutely voiceless to articulate its identity, it resorts to the only means– violence, and hence insurgency.

As Edward Said denotes in *Culture and Imperialism* “The power to narrate, or block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism and constitute one of the main connections between them” (xiii). As such, in the case of Northeast India, insurgency becomes a technique through which identities and nationhood are articulated and consolidated, as it were, narrated by cantering their entire struggle to the aspiration of reclaiming their earlier mode of political existence. Thus, insurgency in the Northeast in general and in Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland in particular, is the political act that undertakes the narration of the nationhood of the communities that are politically, culturally and geographically homogenized under the Indian nationhood.

The third chapter “Insurgency and Its Effect on the Mizo, Naga and Manipuri Societies” examines insurgency and its effects on societies as represented in the selected texts. The three writers explore the breakdown of social and juridical order as the state ceases to function in the face of such drastic actions by both the insurgent groups and the state’s security forces. In doing so, the authors have brought to light the extremity of the sufferings endured by the people as they find themselves caught up between the insurgent groups and the government. This is clearly portrayed in Priyokumar’s “Moon and Rahu” where the unnamed narrator is robbed off by an insurgent group and then questioned and tortured by the Indian army all in the span of just a few hours. The extremity of suffering endured in the absence of the state is also clearly exposed through the character of Lingpao in “One Night” and Chongnikim in “The Rains did not Come” who both lost members of their family as a result of an inter ethnic conflict. Lingpao is unable to attend the funeral as a result of the volatility of the whole situation whereas Chongnikim is displaced geographically, socially

and emotionally as she has lost her husband as a result of the conflict. Thus, she is left with the responsibility of both a father and a mother to her children. When the villagers shift to another place for the sake of their security Chongnikim is reluctant because she loves her home, the place where she belongs, and where her late husband has been buried.

In *Who Sings the Nation State?* Judith Butler writes “...the state is supposed to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship. It is that which forms the conditions under which we are juridically bound. We might expect that the state presupposes modes of juridical belonging...” (3). This function of the state as defined by Butler is largely absent in the case of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland during insurgencies. This nullified condition of state is seen in Malsawmi Jacob’s *Zorami* through the portrayal of the village grouping carried out by the Indian army with extreme brutality. In this case, the people themselves are exploited by the state itself that is supposed to merit juridical belongingness to its citizens. Likewise Lalawmpuia is ordered to kill his uncle and then his comrade by his MNF superiors. Although he does not carry out these orders, the entire incident clearly portrays how the MNF conducted themselves upon its own people which is no better than the Indian army’s. Similar instance of such incident can be seen in *Love in the Time of Insurgency* through the character of Envy who was ordered by Videssellie to kill Rishang and Jivan who said, “the times have changed for the worse, dividing the tribe” (Bhattacharyya 229).

The use of violence in the manner stated above by the state as well as by its non-state counterparts frequently brings in a condition where the common people do not feel the presence of a state to which they belong. In this regards Judith Butler argues:

If the state is what ‘binds,’ it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds,

releases, expels, banishes. If it does the latter, it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e. through 'letting go' or 'setting free'; it expels precisely through the exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prison and, so, in the mode of certain containment we are deposited in a dense situation of military power in which juridical functions become the prerogative of the military.(5)

The states of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland have been embroiled in conflicts and violence since the 1950s and have been militarised as a result of the armed rebellions leading to the failure of the state as citizens are torn between the insurgent groups and the state's security forces. The insurgents put forward their ideology based on ethnic and historical differences which are antagonistic to Indian nationhood thereby leading to the use of force by the state. However the insurgent groups, as aptly portrayed in the selected texts, have, for the most part, become a burden to their own people, as Bhattacharya argues: "The political ideology of such groups in the initial years, is a long forgotten dream today" (as qtd in Lintner 172).

The fourth chapter titled "Women and Insurgency" examines the side of insurgency related to women. Portrayal of women characters such as Zorami in *Zorami*, Sharengla in *Love in the Time of Insurgency*, Chongnikim in 'The Rains did not Come' etc. are closely examined to throw lights on the plights of women during such times.

The suffering of women during times of conflicts and insurgencies, as portrayed in the selected texts, is twofold as they are the victims of the insurgency itself as well as the patriarchal set up of the societies. It is clearly portrayed in the character of Sharengla in *Love in the Time of Insurgency*, who has lived together with a Japanese soldier who later leaves her.

Sharengla's plight is more with the social norms of her community rather than directly with the insurgency. As presented in the novel, the Tangkhul community in Ukhrul is

a close knitted, collectivist patriarchal community where individual freedom is not given much. Identity and any sense of status for women are all acquired in relations to the traditional practice. The community has a set of norms that prescribes the role and function of man and woman in the society. Outside of that structure a woman basically has no meaning. Her relationship with Ishewara has resulted in the lost of her status as a woman in her patriarchal community. Thus, she gives us a clear instance of Beauvior's argument that for a woman "...the world is defined without reference to her, and its aspect is immutable as far as she is concerned... she can take in society only a place already made for her. She regards the existing state of affairs as something fixed" (330).

Zorami in Malsawmi Jacob's *Zorami* too occasionally suffers from the patriarchal attitude of her community. Clear instance of this can be seen when her hand is asked for in marriage. Referring to the fact that she had been rape, her own father says, "You should be only too happy he is willing to marry you, a damaged girl. He is too good for you" (62). However, Zorami does not suffer to the extent that Sharengla does from systematic exploitations. Her suffering is one of psychological trauma as a result of her being raped by an Indian soldier when she was just thirteen years old. This violation by the soldier has consequences in her psychological state that affected her daily social life which reflects what K.C Baral claims: "As a general rule trauma stuns the subject and, sooner or later, brings about disorientation to the subject's existence" (46).

The character of Chongnikim in "The Rains did not Come" shows a different facet of victimhood that women suffer from. Unlike Sharengla, she is not subjected to any systemic patriarchal coercion and unlike Zorami, she is never physically violated. Yet the trauma she is suffering from is just as bad. She has lost her husband as a result of an inter-ethnic conflict. Elizabeth K. Carll argues that "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event" (as qtd in Baral "Introduction" 18). This state of condition of trauma is clearly



reflected in Chongnikim as she found herself constantly slipping away from reality and going into a state of hallucinations after she has lost her husband. Chongnikim's character throws light to a side of women's victimization in times of conflicts in which women are neither physically exploited nor are suffering from a patriarchal system. The loss of her husband alone has rendered her helpless as she is displaced emotionally and geographically - on having to move to another village for the sake of her and her children's security, and thus, leaving her home that is sentimentally attached to her notion of belongingness, a place where her late husband is buried. She is, as mentioned earlier also socially displaced - on having to assume the familial responsibility of her late husband, and juridically - on having to leave behind her property by law. The character of Chongnikim has shown that the victimization of women during times of conflicts and violence extends far beyond the direct exploitation of women. Thus the three writers have given us a candid narration of the different facets of the sufferings of women during the times of conflicts.

The last chapter titled "Conclusion" sums up the findings of the previous chapters. Insurgency, in the states of Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur arises as a result of the emergence of the Indian Nation-state in the post-colonial era which led to a sense of loss to the people. Insurgency in these states is a form of narration, a narrative technique for smaller communities through which they articulate and consolidate their own ethnic and cultural identity. However, as aptly portrayed in the selected primary texts, such insurgencies have caused countless atrocities and violations of human rights from both the rebel groups and the state's security forces, thus leaving the state basically in a nullified condition where it can no longer cater to the needs (security) of its citizens. Jacob and Priyokumar clearly elaborate the burden suffered by the people at the hands of the rebel organizations and the Indian security forces. In his work, Bhattacharyya, on the other hand, emphasizes the confusion and chaos caused by the rebels among their own people while the Indian state hardly finds

representation. Bhattacharyya and Jacob have also shown that the victimization of women during violent conflict and insurgency is always two fold as women suffer physically as the direct victims of the violence and also indirectly as the subordinated members of patriarchal communities. However, Priyokumar goes beyond Bhattacharyya and Jacob and shows a different facet of the victimization of women that goes way beyond the direct physical violation and their exploitation under patriarchy.

Thus, the texts under discussion aptly portray the use of violence as a political protest by the insurgents and its effects on the people. Though the violence serves as the voice through which the minority communities articulate themselves, frequently it causes much atrocities including violation of rights of the people by both the insurgents and the state.

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