Preface

"Identity politics" has been understood in a myriad sense and naturally has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorising. Recent discussions on identity has highlighted multiplicity, the interwoven-ness of the multilayered texture as well as the fluidity, fracturing, and ever oscillating tendency of identity, constantly in the process of building or becoming or shifting, and strongly permeating the hybridizing tendencies of the same. Predictably, there is no straightforward answer to the questions why people believe what their identity is? How strong or authentic that identity is? What is the real and unreal associated with that identity? What are the diverse dynamics behind accepting that identity? What is the nature of identity? Is it fixed or fluid? Can a person have several identities all at the same time? Or why people get swayed by identity at all? Wherever the line up in the debates, thinkers agree that the notion of identity as well as its crisis has become indispensable to contemporary political discourse, at the same time as they concur that it has troubling implications for models of the self, political inclusiveness, and possibilities for solidarity and resistance. At this juncture, then, asking whether one is for or against identity politics and expecting a neat, crisp response, is to ask an impossible question.

The identity consciousness pitted against the backdrop of primordial ethnic consciousness and nostalgia, tends to rely heavily on the issues of origins, kinship, game land, demarcation of the territory, construction of history, re-reading the past, relocating one’s old glory, revival of ethnic clannish identities and practices, assuming old names, renaming of their tribes, correcting phonetic error and such other tactics. Thus there is a concerted, directionised attempt at channelling their ethnic voices in a concrete manner towards the larger regional or national identities and challenging the existing trajectories in state-building/nation-building. These identity movements reflect an attempt at locating the future in the past. Ethnic consciousness which remains highly contentious, and forms a part of the shared, lived everyday experience of Mizoram, serves as an ideal illustration for substantiating to the existing knowledge on identity politics and providing newer insights to the same.
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