CHAPTER-I

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Currently the term ‘Identity Crisis’ enjoys immense popularity in many parts of the world. It is a key word not only in the theoretical and political discourse but also in everyday parlance. It is also necessary to think why such perception and its disorder are spreading throughout the third and fourth world people. They are getting both depression and menace in this crisis. Uncountable people of the world particularly in fourth world are getting forced assimilation, loss of their ancestral land and transfer of population. Besides, they have become refugees in their own native land after conceiving the idea of protecting their identities. So they are in the crisis of conflict situation which leads to the creation of internal contradiction.

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1 Four types of people could be classified in the world today. They are first world people (capitalist countries of Europe and America) 2nd world people, communist countries of the world, 3rd world people means Asia and African people who are under developed and got independence within a few decades. 4th world people, on the other hand people who could not represent in the UN. They are also known as indigenous people.
Like occurring more recently across the world in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere, the people of north east India in general and Manipur in particular are in deep waves of identity crisis. So they are leading in the process of conflict management, conflict transformation and conflict resolution. Basically these are the consequence of identity crisis. So the first chapter deals with its conceptual study and how it related with political discourse. For a clear comprehensive understanding, one needs to see the concept of identity, genesis of tri-ethnic groups (Meitei, Naga and Kuki-Chin), and intervention of external forces and crisis of nationalism.

Identity and Identity Crisis

The definition of a concept in any field of social sciences is usually difficult. And a term such as ‘Identity’ loaded with meanings, values and prejudices is even more difficult to define. This word was originated from the Latin word ‘idem’ which literally meant ‘sameness’ arouses from the notion of something always being itself (rather than
something else). Erickson opines it as a multifaceted notion form by the interrelations of the individuals with their social surroundings and refers to 'a persistent sameness within oneself (self sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with other'. It is the state or fact remaining the same one or ones under the varying conditions and circumstances that the feeling of sameness and continuity of an individual or group that his or their past purposes and values, experiences and belief in a common future belong to him or to them. It is the experience of an individual or group, a recognizable continuous and persistent entity and it is what one thinks about himself as the 'real me'.

Further, the word identity means the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties or in particular qualities under consideration, absolute or essential sameness or oneness. In some discipline like philosophy, it means sameness as distinguished from the

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change or difference. It has been a term of interest to philosophers chiefly in connection with the problem of universals and the law of identity in Logic.5 Again, identity is not a core sociological concept inspite of its frequent occurrence in the everyday vocabulary of sociologist. Even in the substantive areas, such as the study of ethnicity, where we can observe the use of the term with great frequency, identity has not received sustained analytical attention, in the sense of locating it in conceptual contents and sharpening it to much more than connotative significance.6

Moreover as a norm, the social group speaking a language and possessing common cultural tradition tend to developed a close association more quickly. The Individual level contacts at the initial stage, leads to a large scale contacts even through the exchange of spouses and involvements in various socio-economic activities. In most cases this process ultimately leads to the acceptance of

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common identity. Thus identity of a society appears to be a summation of what individuals have given to the society and society sustains its identity through a continuous projection of infinite space and time. Further, identity can be broadly characterized as the process by which an individual is bound to his or her social self. And the sense of identity is a very natural human tendency.

The process of identity formation comes to a decisive crisis in the youth - a crisis met alleviated or aggravated by different societies in different ways. It is not the function of a single process, various endogenous and exogenous forces influence in building the affinities and attachments that make identity formation a complex process. The development in this process has fused with each other in a sense of sameness and continuity. Then the persistent infantile identification are brought in line with urgent new serve definitions and irreversible role of choices, these develop the identity crisis. To Erickson, the development of

self identity meets a catalyst – and identity crisis around adolescences or early adulthood.\(^8\)

The concept of crisis is a lay term in searching for a scholarly meaning. Literally Greek meaning of turning point or time of decision is used by historians, sociologist, political scientist, psychologists etc. If a crisis in any process is just a turning point, then identity crisis is turning point in the process of one’s or group existence. But here, it means a turning point that distinguishes the outcome of an event favorably or unfavorably, between life and death, violence or non-violence and resolution or protracted conflict. Erickson regard crisis as inevitable in the development of identity of the individuals.\(^9\)

He opines that crisis here means ‘a crucial time or an inescapable turning point for better or worse’. “Better” here means a confluence of constructive energy of the individuals or society and “Worse” means prolonged identity confusions

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in young individuals or in society. Thus, it is an acute anxiety state experience by a person or group who finds it's difficult to establish a clearly defined personal or group identity.

For instance there occurs a phase or period seeking new set of definitions amidst unclear role choices of an individual or group; there occurs the psycho-social phenomenon of identity crisis.

According to Erickson, this term was first used for a specific clinical purpose in the Mt. Zion rehabilitation clinic during the Second World War, a natural emergency which permitted psychiatric workers of different persuasions and denominations to work together harmoniously. It has popular and scientific usages becomes terms which alternately circumscribe something to large and so seemingly self-evident that to demand definition would almost seem pity, while at other times they designate something made so narrow for purpose of measurement that the overall meaning is large and it could just as well be

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called something else.\textsuperscript{12} It is also recurring phenomenon in the social development of a group or a community.

In every new generation, there is always a demand and confirm positive identity to regenerate itself and preserve. With the emergence of pluralism, post modernity and breakdown of traditional social structure, in contrast to the earlier momentary crisis depicted by Erickson, the state of crisis is ongoing and endemic throughout the individual life of society.\textsuperscript{13} It is also opened up to focus on distinctive forms of social identity based on the ethnicity, gender, youth and nationality.

Moreover controversial efforts, which was made by both Fukuyama’s thesis on “The End of History” and Samuel P Huntington “The Clash of Civilisation” focused as the central theme that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilisational identities, are shaping the pattern of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict. In Huntington’s debate, one could see basic assumption of

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.15.
clash in concepts such as, 'pluralistic', 'modernization' and 'consequence is declining'. The same theme could be applied in the context of Manipur also. For instance the concept of Manipuri nationalism could not be receptible to the hill and ethnic pluralism and its commonness would not be beyond the argument in the mindset of all major ethnic groups of Manipur. In other words civilization and modernism give negative tacit values to them. So they are heeding in moulding revenging attitude by modifying the past history without facts. It also leads them to make cultural forces and ferment as they think about ethnic nationalism and racial boundary. So the present discourse is based on political implication of it.

As we have social, ethnic or cultural identity of communities and national identity. For example, a social identity of an ethnic group includes their common past or history, cultural heritage, linguistic affinity, their shared experiences, struggle and suffering, with a strong sense of belonging to each other and identification with ideology
and a belief in the common future. In this social identity there is no crisis among the various ethnic groups of Manipur, because they are from the same ancestors having blood close ties of blood relationship. But the cleavages which are being visualized are an outcome of the external forces and crisis of nationalism. So it is better to trace back their ancestral relationship and compelled to see how crisis of nationalism gives acute anxiety to the people and keep them in the turning point for better or worse.

After having the above perception and keeping views in our mind, it is better to see how we have been confronting the problem of identity crisis in our little paradise. We know that we have a plural society consisting of three major tri-ethnic groups namely the Meitei 14 the Nagas 15 and

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14 Meitei composed of seven clans-Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang, Khoba-Nganba, and Sarang-Leisangthem. Mangang is also known as Ningthouja.
15 Naga- today in the Nagaisation process the following ethnic groups becomes Naga. They are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Aao, Chakesang, Chang, Chiru, Cholte, Kharam, Khiamniungan, Koireng, Konyak, Laimung, Lamkang, Lotha, Mao, Mao, Maram, Maring, Makhori, Monsang, Mayon, Noete, Pangmei, Phom, Pochury, Poumei, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tangkhul, Tangsa, Tarao, Thangal, Wancho, Yimchunger and Zeliangrong.
the Kuki-Chin[^16], with various migrant communities and Manipuri's Muslims known as Meitei Pangals. Both the Meitei and Meitei Pangal are in the valley and majority of the Naga and the Kuki-chin people in the hills. The 'Naga' and 'Kuki-Chin' are the generic terms given by the administrators of the British India government and those anthropologists of by gone days. Both of these tribes have got a number of tribes, sub-tribes, clans, sub-clans, lineage and sub-lineages. Though the Naga and Kuki-Chin have their separate culture, customs, traditions, language, manners, beliefs, rites and rituals, method and cultivation, forms of government, they share the same origin with Meitei and also possess common ancestors and same historical roots.

**Both Nagas and Kukis are from Meitei clans**

Most of the outsiders leave Manipur after conceiving the idea that plainsman and highlanders of Manipur remain different from each other, because they eat differently dress

[^16] Kuki-Chin: It is also a nomenclature given by the British, it has three groups they are Old Kuki, New-Kuki and Kuki-Chin. In the old-Kuki, Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Kairou, Koieng, Kom, Lamgang, Paite, Purum, Simte, Vaiphei, Zou and Hmar are included, in the new-Kuki, Thadou (Doungei, Misao, Lupheng, Lapho, Ngei, Lamhao, Thangeo and Taelhag) are included, Kuki-chin group comprised of Thadou, Paite, Gangte, Simte, Vaiphei, Sohtse, Zou, Hmar and Mizo.
differently and even tend to think differently. It is also mainly influenced by the geographical factor that one-tenth of the total area is valley and the remaining is made up of hills. These areas are having unsound communication and not developed in all fields in comparison with valley. It creates the idea of differences and it has been sharpened by the feelings that they are two social organisms diametrically opposite to each other. They seem always do and have been doing so. Meitei have to know the composition of Manipuri’s and tribal also have to trace back their ancestry. Both the communities contributed their sweat and blood to the growth of Manipur. Why should not the Meitei emphasise the contributions of the tribal in building up Manipur though they were participating very much lesser in the life of Manipur. In short, Manipur is the home of tribal as it is of the Meiteis.

The budding scholars of Manipur concerned with the welfare and overcoming the ills plaguing in present Manipur has always been about those concerning who can find out
the different social steams of Meitei and ‘Chingmee’ (Hill dwellers) in the early history of Manipur, who can pick up different elements of Meitei-Tribal social norms in the past.\textsuperscript{17} That is the result that we have to identify who are them with the help of history. The term ‘Naga’ and ‘Kuki’ is non-existent in the olden days of Manipur history. All are from Meitei clans except a few groups who came to Manipur in the later part of Manipur history.\textsuperscript{18}

The history of Manipur is the story of relationship between hill and valley. It is too long. Even today, people have illusion that they are not from common ancestry. So the highlanders always speak for themselves, not for others. It indicates that highlanders did not try to trace back the relationship. It is natural in one sense because they have not any written documents and history. They might also have not. They were migrated to the hill. Their forefathers inhabited in the valley. Practically all should confine in the valley. Valley people were known as ‘Tamme’ and hill folk were

\textsuperscript{17} Dhanabir Laishram, “Chaoaam Khunlai Amasung Meeyam”, Imphal, 2000, p.6.
\textsuperscript{18} Personal interviewed with N. Khelchandra on 21 May 2004, he stated that all the hill folk are from the Meitei clans.
known as ‘Chingmee’. They were from the same ancestry. That is why both valley and hill people are same. T.C Hudson observes that, “Two hundred years ago, in the internal organization, in religion, in habits and manners, the Meities were as the hill people now are.” In short, they were having close ties of blood relationship. They are brothers and sisters of a family. This is proved beyond doubt by the historical background of this tiny state.

Manipur have a recorded history of coronation only from 33 A.D. during the reign of Nongda Leiren Pakhangba. Before him Manipur was ruled by the leader of Khaba clan (it is one of the clan of the Meitei). It can be traced with the help of some chronicles, ancient text of Manipur such as Panthoibi Khongul, Chakpa Khunda Khunthok, and Pakhangba Laihui etc. His name was Khaba Sokchrongba. Panthoibi was his daughter –in-law.

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19 According to Kriti Tensuba, all of us were coming from the Yunnan province of china, settling at the river bank of the Huwangho River.
This clan was very powerful before 33 A.D. But another king, successor of Khaba whose name is Nongchenba fought with Pakhangba of Ningthouja clan. Pakhangba was defeated and took refuge at Moirang. He got two children namely Mungyang Chaoba and Tangkrumlumyiba. Then Pakhangba attacked to the king Nongchenba and killed in the battlefield and most of the Khaba people fled away to take shelter in different parts of Manipur. Some Khaba converted as Kabui Nungna; some were as Tangkhul and Mahou Lontai. Some of them were mixing with Angom clan. Lastly the king Khaba Nonganba surrendered to the king Nongda Laiyen Pakhangba.\(^\text{22}\)

Moreover we have the story of the leader of Sarang Leisangthem who also landed on the hill and lived as highlanders. He belonged to the Kabui clan. The same case also happened to the Khuman clan. Most of the Khuman people also inhabit in the hill as Maring. The names of the Khuman leaders were the last son of Sanaba Meemaba,\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{22}\) Chokpa Khunda Khunthok. (Both Khaba and Pakhangba had enmity, which is also given in Pakhangba Laihui) M.S sources. N Khelchandra.
Thingol Likmaba's son Khamlangba and his son Khayingba. According to Manipur's ancient text 'Tutenglon', most of the Moirang people were settling on the Koubru hills and the people of Selloi Langmai on the Nongmaiching hills. They were practicing inter-marriage among them. During the flood of Manipur, Meitei Ningthou Khuyoi Tompok and his wife Nongmainu Ahongbi get three children. They are Yoymongba, Taothingmang and Lairok Lembi. She was married to the king Anganga of Koubru hill and settled to the Koubru hills with his brothers. Thus people of different clans scattered from valley to the hills of Manipur. So they are the same members of a family having a pure blood relationship. W.Mc Culloch observes that the major tribes and clans of the Meitei to have been the descendents of the Naga and Kuki tribes. That means he studied the relationship between hill and valley people in the later period when they stayed here, if he analysed touching with all these past incidents, he should say or remarked that the major tribes of Naga and Kuki are the descendents of the Meities. In other words we

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need to ponder again and deep retrospection towards understanding such relationship instead of giving flying bird’s views is required.

Thus the people of Manipur have been performing the function of ‘Mera Haochongba’ since time immemorial in order to strengthen this relationship. In this festival most of the highlanders with their chiefs are coming to the palace in every October (Mera) and performing so many traditional activities, cultural items and Grand feast.

**Ethnic Pluralism Canvass and Identity Crisis**

It is well known that Manipur is inhabited by three major ethnic groups, the Meities, the Nagas and the Kuki-Chin. Different ethnic groups had asserted their ethnicity in social, economic and political formation. And ethnicity is a very decisive force in the identity formation of the Nagas and Kuki-Chin groups. But among the Meities, it had ceased to be an effective force after the attainment of nationhood and nation state.\(^{25}\) And this ethnic pluralism is the root cause of

the absence of common identity of the people of Manipur and it leads to the identity crisis more complex. Moreover, the genesis of the identity crisis can be traced to the Sanskritization of Manipur, British colonialism, Christian evangelism among the hill tribes, Manipur’s merger into Indian union and occurrence of tribal solidarity movements.

It is undisputed fact that for the hill people as a whole, the political headquarters remained Imphal. Due to having foreign aggression and occasional rebellion, highlanders accepted the valley king as the lord of the valley and hill as well. The king of the valley was the only person to maintain peace and security to both the hill and valley people. His writ ran not only in the hills now forming parts of Manipur but even beyond it towards the north of Nagaland. The whole area looked upon the king as the sovereign and his Meitei subjects of the valley were submitted to in the Naga Hills. According to Col. Johnston, all the villages in the present Nagaland had Manipuri’s names in addition to their own.

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Nagaland is known to Manipuri's as 'Thibongmei'. King Gambhir Singh (1825-34) reduced several villages in the Naga Hills including Kohima where he stood on a stone and had his footprint sculptured on it, in token of conquest.²⁷ The Nagas greatly respected this stone and cleaned it from time to time.²⁸ But today it was blasted by bomb and kept in the archives into pieces. It was done by the Naga ultras to make confusion of Manipur boundary expanded by the king. Col. John stone says that the people of Manipur valley (Meitei) could go to any village in the former Naga hills and be sure of warm hospitality at a time when the British venturing into these areas unprotected, ran the risk of being murdered.

A group of Nagas went to Imphal in a delegation and requested the king to take them into the Hindu fold. But the Hindu Brahma Sabha of the palace gave the negative response on the ground that a 'Hindu is born, never made'.²⁹ The king of Manipur refused it, refused in the sense that he could not influence the Brahma Sabha. Thus conversion of

Vaishnavism Hindu of Meitei took place during the reign of Pamheiba though the great objection was made by the peoples and ‘Maichous’ (they constitutes the class of nobility who by virtue of their knowledge act as advisor of the sovereign in the temporal as well as religious affairs) of valley.

This was the crucial period of hill valley relationship. Hodson observes that ‘the successive waves of foreign invasion, Shan, Burmese, English, Hindu had left each permanent marks on the civilization of the people so that they have finally passed away from the stage of primitive culture into one of comparative civilization, but their ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted, and in my opinion needs no further insistence’.30 The social intimacy of hill-valley people was parted ways by the rigid norms of Vaishnavite Hinduism. Some section of the people of the valley went a bit far from king jurisdiction and remained as original valley people. Today they are not having any different characteristic with today’s non Christian

tribal. In short they were having the same religion, set of habits, customs and manners, the vestige of which is still to be found in non-Christian Naga villages of today.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus due to having rigid principles of Vaishnavism, it created a rift and the ever widening cleavages among the hill and valley. Things gradually began to fall in place and the crust of conservatism started breaking. But when Sanskritization of the Meitei society and state in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century begun, when the royalty and the common people were converted into Hinduism, was set rolling; deliberate attempts were made to give a new Identity to the people and kingdom of the Meities. The kingdom was renamed 'Manipur' according to 'Sanamahi Laikan' in 1724 AD, a new genealogy of the royal family was prepared tracing its origin to the Aryan origin of the Meitei who were classified as the Kshetriya caste; the religious syncretism between traditional Meitei religion with Hinduism was brought out. This

Sanskritization process created confusion due to the identification of religion with racial or ethnic origin.

Tribal Identity Expansion Movement

Most of the outsiders harbour the notion that Meiteis have only one clan. So they differently perceive Meiteis and tribal. In actual, for the valley people, the term Meitei is applicable to anyone belonging to the seven clans. Meitei are composed of seven clans known as ‘Mangang’ also known as Ningthouja, ‘Luwang’, ‘Khuman’, ‘Angom’, ‘Moirang’, ‘Khaba-Nganba’ and ‘Sarang Leisangthem’. Out of this seven clan except Mangang, most of them were scattering as highlanders. So Nagas and Kukis are Meitei in origin. Roland Shimmi observes that the seven original Meities clans or tribes and the Nagas are racially one. These seven clan had their own respective territories, population and kings, who ruled over their clan members. They were commonly known as seven independent communities. This clan fought with each other for acquiring more land.

resources, wealth and men. Conquest and annexation amongst themselves continued for a long period. Thus first of all Khaba-Nganba and Sarang-Leisangthem were merged to the Meities (number of both the population of clans were very few because most of them inhabited in the hill) and then Luwang and Angom followed suit. The Khuman reigned up to 12th century and was subdued by the Meitei, and Moirang was completely conquered and subdued in the 18th century.\textsuperscript{33}

After 18th century all the seven clans were united as one group commonly known as Meitei. Before the beginning of 19th century all the highlanders of Manipur were ruled by their chief. In reality these tribal people were some of the clans of Meitei. Majority of them were ‘Khaba- Nganba’ and ‘Sarang Leisangthem’. They were Kabui, Tangkhul, Maring, Khongsai and Ana1.\textsuperscript{34} Roland Shimmi also observes that the

\textsuperscript{34} Khelchandra’s “Ching Amasung Tamgi Mari”, unpublished article.
Meitei clan Khaba Nganba in every probability is the Khapainao or Kapainao clan of the Thangkhul.35

They settled to the hill for many reasons. King Gambhir Singh completely subdued almost all of them and Manipur was brought under the sovereignty of one king. Thus all of us are concentrating to one umbrella known as Manipuri's (most of the Meitei people want to call it as Meitei or Meetei. But it is better to call Manipuri in order to have integral name, because Manipuri means those people who were inhabited in Manipur). But the people of Manipur are confronting the problem of ethnic pluralism canvass to the highlanders. Highlanders intentionally refuted to being Manipuri's. They were very much in anguish that valley people and their king did not launching such ethnic pluralism canvass to the highlanders in time.

It was a big tragedy of valley and hill people because this ethnic pluralism canvass should be done successfully, if there was no intervention of Hindu Vaishnavism or

exogenous religion. The subsequent result is that the cleavage between hill and valley could be seen very obviously. As a consequent fall out the highlanders are compelled to identify themselves as belonging to either Naga or Kuki. This does not and need not mean the integration of hill and valley resulting in the emergence of a new single and social amalgam in place of the existing two. As long as the dichotomy of hill and valley exists, there will continue to be two societies with individual characteristics. But there should be no hurdles and obstacles to prevent the generation of forces that would make for a symbiotic relationship between the two for enabling them to mix better.

Like Meitei unification of seven clans, highlanders are also very busy to keep the same carbon copy of Meitei. They want to unite all the different tribes in one group as Nagas and Kukis but it is very far from the unification of their brother and sisters of the Meities. They are compelled to do. Because they have so many different names or ethnics such as Anal,
Aimol, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha, Naga, Koirao, Koireng, Kom, Lamkang, Mizo, Lushai, Maram, Maring, Mao, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Salhie, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, etc. Besides them, there were also unspecified group. In case of Kuki according to Daltion, it consists of old and new Kuki. The old and new Kukis are obviously of the same race and point of divergence arises merely from their having settled or migrated at different periods and stages of history. The Kukis are now found as neighbours of Nagas in Assam and scattered in northern Cachar, Manipur and across the border in Myanmar and Bangladesh. They are described as a nation of hunters and warriors. They rule as a nation by their principal hereditary chiefs.

According to Grierson, the term new Kuki may be taken as synonymous with Thadou clan. The clan is very large and Thadou entered Manipur hills at about the middle of 18th century. It is also giving confusion to the Meitei, because only the British who divided the people living in the hill areas into
Nagas and Kukis. Further they divided Kuki as old Kuki and new Kuki, like as Naga and Kacha Nagas.

But the question is what about of Taothingmang, son of Meitei king Khuyoi Tompok (158-264). Taothingmang with his brother Yoymongba were taking shelter to the Koubru hills, it was ruled by their brother in-law, Anganga (who was also coming from Moirang) during the time of deluge.\textsuperscript{36} It might happen between the years of 264 to 364. They were settling on this hill as Khongsai (valley people prefer to call Kuki as khongsai). Lizangnee Gangte claimed that Naotthingkhong and Khongtekcha were also Thadou kings.\textsuperscript{37} Kuki also have their legend that they were settling in the valley. But they could no longer continue to live in this what they called the upper valley (Phaichungung) due to devastating flood they calls it 'Tutobin'. As a result, most of the Khongsai (Thadou) migrated to the hills.

Further the handiworks of British colonial administration and their divide and rule policy had played an important

\textsuperscript{36} Tutenglon, M.S.
\textsuperscript{37} Lizangnee Gangte, Unpublished article on Communal Harmony.
role in the movement of tribal identity expansionism. In short they were responsible for indiscriminately dividing the hill tribes into Naga and Kuki. This classification led to ethnic identification of the tribes into these two constellations. However, identification with the Naga has been a process of pan-Naga identity. This ethnic identification of tribes into Naga constellation which may be called a process of Nagaisation has social, cultural and political implication. The Nagaisation process was greatly strengthened by the Naga insurgency for independence based on the loose form of Naga nationalism. From the very beginning of Naga National Council movement led by Phizo to get independence of Nagaland, he tried to make Naga nationality and viable territory of his dream nation by expanding Naga territory, which inhabited surrounding Naga Hills district of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The same political dream and line was followed by NSCN (IM).

After 1965, they wanted to get it into practice. So they organized and mobilized the various communities of Manipur
hills with the political tone of Naga sovereignty by using anti Meitei card. Even they used the method of ethnic cleansing in these areas. So Naga-Kuki clash was happened. After 1996, NSCN (IM) was in the process of peace talk with the government of India in order to get good chances for mobilizing the Manipuri Nagas to consolidate and solidify them as Naga oneness by demanding all the Naga inhabited areas under one administrative unit. That's why alteration of Manipur boundary became the central agenda of the peace talk. So the people of this region have witnessing interaction and reaction in between the Manipuri Nagas and Manipuri Meities.

Now Nagas are more or less regarded as an emerging marginal nationality. Within the broad Naga constellation, there is several tribal solidarity processes. Among the Tangkhul who have dialectical differences for almost every village, the adoption of Ukhrul dialect as the standard Tangkhul literary language has strengthened the Tangkhul identity and unity.
The 'Zemei', 'Liangmei' and 'Rongmei' also started the Zeliangrong movement to forge unity and promote integration among these cognate tribes. A Zeliangrong identity has now been formed. During the post independence period, the Anal, Moyon, Monsang and Lamkang tribes organized the 'Pakan' movement to bring the four tribes under one common name 'Pakan' but it failed.\(^{38}\) The Moyon and Monsang tribes tried to combine into 'Mon' but the separate feeling of Moyon and Monsang is still very strong.

The Kom-Rem movement was also organized with a view to bring the Kom, Chiru, Aimol, Purum and one time the Koireng to give a common identity to these tribes. The Mao-Maram tribal alliance for political purpose has not led to social or cultural integration. The Poumai group does not like to be grouped with Mao tribe.

Among the Kukis there is no such process of integration till the Mizo insurgency. While Kuki rebellion (1917-1919) was

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aimed at Kuki 'independence', it did not lead to further integration but to separation into distinct tribes. But the Mizo integration movement again restored a sense of unity among these tribes. The concept of Kuki-Mizo was popularized. Now it is being replaced by 'Zomi' movement after the solution of the Mizo rebellion. The 'Zo' or 'Zomi' identity is again catching on among the Kuki-Chin tribes of Manipur and surrounding areas, though tribal identities have not been submerged under it. The Chin-Kuki-Mizo (CHIKIM) solidarity process is continuing while the Thadou are asserting their Kuki identity.

Both Lois and Highlanders are getting same Faith

The 'Lois' as said earlier were created out of the Meiteis, for social offences and not born as such originally. Most of them were scattering at different places of Manipur like highlanders. They also have their clans. They are the real Meitei who cannot be touched by the religious hands of Vaishnavite. But they cannot be called as Meitei. The canvassing of Meitei to all the inhabitants of Manipur
(including seven clans and highlanders) was going up to 18th century. It was carried on the sense that they were unclean because of their habit of meat eating, poultry keeping, piggeries and preparation of wine. These were done only when Meities of valley were converted as Vaishnavite communities. Some intellectuals gave their opinion that it might be the Meities of all if the Meitei king could finish canvassing Meitei (plural ethnic canvass) before Vaishnavite came.  

From this record of history of Manipur, it is clearly given that all the people who inhabited in Manipur are clans of Meities. In course of time, they are treated as Naga and Kuki. So it is an undisputed fact that we all are from same ancestor. So it is better to use the term ‘Manipuri Meitei’, ‘Manipuri Naga’ and ‘Manipuri Kuki’ in order to bring common name to all, because we need moral integration. Moreover we have need to recall the adorning of Kabui dress for ascending the Meitei throne, to bring the most sacred fire (Andro Mei), it is used to be taken by lighting a

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lamp for the coronation of the king. This indicates that it is the best example of hill-Lois and valley unity. Moreover in ‘Lai-Haraqba’ (Indigenous festival of the Meitei for appeasing god), it cannot be ended without the scene of Tangkhul.

**Crisis of Meitei Identity**

It is earlier mentioned that Meitei is composed of seven clans namely, Mangang (Ningthouja), Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Angom, Sarang- Leisangthem, Khaba- Nganba. All of these seven clans were merged to only one nomenclature as 'Meitei'. But the identity of Meitei is a very controversial issue. The cultural revivalism represented by the ‘Sanamahi’ movement had successfully challenged the notion of Aryan origin of Meitei. This identity confusion emerges because of the multiple ethnic roots of the Meitei nationality.40 And the crisis of Meitei identity began with its entry into religious arena that is the atrocious imposition of an alien socio-religious cultural system which had been despotically regulated

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through repressive measures under fanatical regime having no religious tolerance. 41

One of the important features of the identity problem of Meitei is that though they were a ruling group, they could not bring the hill tribes into their identity expansion canvass. After Sanskritization the king had adopted the name of Manipur. And Manipuri has been widely used to mean the Meitei peoples and Meitei language only. The hill tribes feel that they were outside the connotation of the terms Manipuri's or Meitei. The process of Christianisation among the hill tribes and Sanskritisation among the Meitei have multiplied more complicacies in their effort to resolve identity crisis. Yet the Meiteis have at best restored their spirit of nationalism despite confronting certain misconceived notion of identity. 42

**Repercussion of Identity Crisis**

Though the consciousness of ethnic identity of tri-ethnic groups is well established, the problems of names remain complex as ever before. The hill tribes do not call them

42 Ibid., p.42.
Manipuri’s nor the Meitei call them as such. The tribes prefer to call themselves as Nagas or Kuki or Mizo or by their tribal names though Manipuri means the Meitei people or Manipuri language, a section of Meitei or Meitei. Majority of the Meitei revivalist, who want to revive Sanamahism (indigenous religion), do not have intention to call them Manipuri because this is the name given by the outsider. If this tendency continues, it will logically lead to a situation that Manipuri may become just a mere geographical expression. So it depends on the willingness of the people inhabiting in both hill and valley.

Thus it is saying that the cleavages among tri-ethnic groups of Manipur were done by the external forces in the past. They are religion, both Sanskritisation and Christianisation, British colonialism and Indian administration that followed the same pattern of colonial legacy. But no one care about these external forces by feeding irrelevant arguments and writing a new history without facts.
Thus the emergence of ethnic nationalism instead of having Manipuri nationalism compounded and confused the social fabric of Manipur. As consequence the people of hill and valley are in the process of assertion of interest of each groups and reaction of it. So Manipur becomes breeding grounds of conflicts and it could also turn as spiral conflict culture without delay. That's why the scholars are opening their eyes and tried to see and examine the conflict situation of this region. Really speaking all are by product of immature and confusion nationalism of other ethnic groups. Therefore, the identity crisis of Manipur associates political implications and discourse.