CHAPTER II

ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL BASES OF INSURGENCY MOVEMENTS IN THE NORTH-EAST
Northeast India: A Profile

Northeast India is composed of seven states, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Together, they are known as the land of Seven sisters. The area is located between 29 N and 22 N latitude and 89'46 and 97'6 E longitude and occupies approximately 25 million square kilometres. The northeast offers an enchanting view of scenic beauty of hills, mountains, valleys, lush forests and endless plains, the beauty accentuated by its unpolluted environment.

The land and the people has been an enigma to the rest of the country owing to its relative isolation. Contrary to general belief, the people inhabiting the seven states are different from one another. There exists much diversity in their origins, culture, traditions, customs and languages. The people belong to different ethnic groups, and speak different languages and dialects numbering about four hundred and twenty. In the hill areas, the Indo-Mongoloid group speak languages which belong to the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese except the Khasis and Jaintias who speak Austro-Asiatic group of languages.

Ethnically, the people broadly belong to the Indo-
Aryan, Australoid, Negrito and Mongoloid group. The history of the arrival into India of the various Mongoloid groups speaking dialects of the Sino-Tibetan speech family is not known.\(^1\) The Tibeto-Burman group probably formed an area of dispersion somewhere in the present province of Sinkiang in China, where from they began to spread east and south. From this centre of dispersion, some of the Tibeto-Burman tribes took up their trek along the Brahmaputra river westwards. They found homes in the mountainous tracts of the Balipara frontier tract to the east of Bhotan as Abors, Akas, Miris, Daflas and in the Sadiya Frontier tract as Mishmis. The Assam Burman groups of the Tibeto-Burman include the Nagas and Bodos, who came down to Burma and entered Assam and Brahmaputra Valley in fairly early times, the Kuki and Chin people who are found in southeast Assam and in Burma and the Kachins or Singphos and the Lolos who have always remained in Burma.\(^2\) The whole of northeast, barring some areas of Assam and Tripura plains are inhabited by races belonging to the Tibeto-Mongoloid stock. However, though they belong to the same racial group, it has been suggested that there were mainly four waves of immigration,

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2. ibid., p.3.
the first was from Tibet and Nepal which probably entered via Arunachal (formerly called NEFA) and to which belong some tribes like Mishmis and Akas. The second, probably was from Southern China-Yunan Province, across the valley of the river Irrawady and in this movement the Tais, Shans, Kachins and Ahom formed a part. The third was the Mon-Khmer, also called Kol. Mon-Annam and to this group belong to the Khasis, Jaintias and Kacharis. The fourth was the Chin-Kuki who belong to Chin tribes of Burma. This immigration is the most recent, far as late as 1918, there was migration towards the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) and certain districts of Manipur, particularly South Manipur.3

By faith, the major religions of the world have significant followers in the northeast. There are Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and those who continue to worship according to their tribal customs and faith; However, Christianity has made significant inroads, especially among the hill tribes.

The northeastern states comprise a compact geographical whole located as it is on the far eastern corner of the country. There is a strong sense of affinity among the people. The diversity and multiformity of the northeast has

been instrumental in dictating the historical process and evolution of the present scenario, where the common factor has been insurgency. It has spread its tentacles wide, enveloping practically the whole region and giving rise to an endless cycle of bloodshed.

Insurgency, however, is not the only notable factor of the northeast. A proper understanding and appreciation of the land and its people calls for the removal of all pre-conceived ideas and notions.

The limited exchange of positive interaction has been an impediment in building relations based on understanding and respect. The North East has been viewed, to a large extent, through pre-conceived set ideas which stems from lack of proper knowledge and understanding of the people and their way of life. There are many who believe that civilization has not reached the hills, and that the people still live under the cover of thick jungles and go hunting for food. Moreover, such misinformation and exaggerated tales are grossly resented by the people, who do not form very high opinion of the plainsmen.

The North East, has also been largely ignored and overlooked. There are very limited coverage of the progress and development, and events of the area rarely find mention in the national dailies and magazines. Very often, it is
only the negative image which gets highlighted. Reports of insurgency, drud-addiction, AIDS, and western culture of the people are made more newsworthy. Such one track exposure has influenced those, with no first hand knowledge of the land and people to view the land through only one side of the coin. Moreover, the experiences of those, in government services or business class assumes importance in the exposure of the North East to the rest of the country. Very often, personal adjustment problems leads to exaggerated tales about the North East.

The outcome of such attitude is that, the positive side of the North East is relegated to the background. A lay man would easily assume that, life does not exist beyond the bane of insurgency, drugs, smuggling, and AIDS for the people. It is a total misrepresentation of the people, their culture and heritage.

The people of the northeast are proud of their culture and heritage, having been richly blessed with much diversity and distinct identity. The tribal communities world over possess and enjoy a rich folklore which overridingly plays a pivotal role in their community life. Culture presents a myriad of colours, and intricate work of art which has much scope for its positive exploitation. The traditional costumes worn by the people are fascinating and unique in style.
and design. The attire of the womenfolk known as 'puan' (Mizoram) and 'mekhla' (Nagaland), which forms the lower garment and is handwoven, stands out in its combination of colours and design. The beautiful silk 'mekhla-chadar' of Assam is graceful and feminine when worn. Besides, the shawls of Nagaland have become very popular within and outside the northeast. The men and women of each tribe are distinguished by the distinct design of shawl they possess.

Today, many tribal designs and motifs have been used in modern styles as in clothing and house interiors which have gained immense popularity. There is much potential to be tapped in the area through proper exposure and infrastructure. Tribal handicrafts are mostly woven by hand and it involves long period of time for its finished product, which makes it time consuming. The use of loom has come to be in vogue in recent times, which has sped up production, but to the experience of real tribal artistic product by hand has no equal.

The northeast also has much to offer in rhythm and sound. The dances of the different ethnic groups are graceful and unique and pulsates with the vibrant sound of traditional instruments. The Bihu Dance of Assam, Cheraw Lam of Mizoram, Raslila Dance of Manipur, Nongkrem Dance of Meghalaya, Monpa Dance of Arunachal Pradesh and the folk dances
of the Naga tribes offer rich cultural heritage and tradition. The use of drums and traditional instruments are popular and accompany the various dance forms done great skill and rhythm.

Events in the past have also been largely responsible in preventing the growth of positive relations. With Independence India was challenged and confronted with problems of a new sovereign state. It was at this critical juncture, that the northeastern hills were reverberating with political discontent and assertion of their identity. The developments which led to independence on 14 August, 1947 failed to encompass the hill areas which resulted in the tribal leaders to seek the destiny of their people, different from that of the Indian nation. The divergent path pursued by them and the rejection of their demand by the Government of India resulted in decades of confrontation and an endless cycle of violence. There was no common ground to build a constructive national oneness to cement the diverse unity and such possibility was not sought either.

The post-independence developments though being largely responsible for the alienation of the northeast tribals, was not the only cause. One has to look into history, prior to independence the British rule, over the country to fully
grasp the root cause of the present day situation. The turmoil which challenges the entire region today is closely linked with the developments that took place under British Raj. Thus, the study of the present involves a deeper understanding of the northeast in relation to British rule and its effects.

The further political developments in the hills and elsewhere in the country continued to contradict one another which resulted in the growing isolation of the people. The situation has shown little progress today. The level of communication has been limited and the continued dominance of insurgency has taken its toll on mutual trust at the political and common man level.

The situation though, has not reached a dead end. There are rooms for improving relations from the highest to the lowest level, which can come about in the right atmosphere. People's perception of each other must be built up weighing the positive qualities and an open acceptance of diverse culture and customs. A healthy interaction and cross cultural exchange would ensure the right spirit of brotherhood, and is the duty of every citizen to work towards it.

The prevalence of insurgency is a strong feature of the northeast, but the intensity and its presence vary from
state to state. Insurgency, in Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur are decades old, whereas in Assam, it is relatively of recent origin and in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya there are definite signs of a growing restlessness and disenchantment which handled insensitively could snowball into yet another armed outbreak. The study of the insurgency movements, its origins and developments cannot be studied in isolation from the historical process. A historical outline of its growth and linkages are made for a wider understanding of its impact in nurturing the armed rebellion in the respective states.

MIZORAM AND THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT (M.N.F.)

The state of Mizoram is one of the youngest state in the northeast, having attained the status of a full-fledged state on 20 February 1987. It occupies an area of 21,087 sq. km. and according to Census Survey (1991), the population is 6,86,217 with a density of 33 per sq. km. In the field of literacy, the state has made tremendous progress, boasting a high 81.23 per cent (1991), the second highest in

4. It remained a district of Assam till 1972, when it was elevated to the status of Union Territory. It was originally known as 'Lushai Hills' till the end of August, 1954. On 1 September, 1954 it was changed to 'Mizo District' by the Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act, 1954.
The location of Mizoram is of strategic importance. It is flanked by Bangladesh in the west and by Burma in the east, with a total length of international boundary extending to approximately 620 miles in length. The close proximity of the neighbouring countries has, to a significant extent, been instrumental in encouraging the secessionist movement in the state. The security concern of India's internal stability was severely tested by the outbreak of insurgency which dominated the political, social and economic scene for over two decades.

The insurgency in northeast India articulates some of the themes which go back even to pre-British and British rule. And hence the origins of insurgency cannot be fully comprehended without a preliminary understanding of these themes.

The history of the Mizos, prior to the British administration is vague and obscure. The absence of recorded history has added to the lack of information. According to traditional beliefs, the Mizos came out of a stone cave called Chhinlung. Legends say that, in the event of a catastrophic earthquake, darkness enveloped the land and the forefathers of the Mizos emerged out of the cave.

Historically, the Mizos trace their origin to 1000
A.D., when they are believed to have migrated from northwest China. Their early settlement was on the hill tracts of Myanmar between the Run and Tiau rivers around 1500-1700 A.D. The settlement was marked by a constant struggle for supremacy. The internecine warfare resulted in the supremacy of the 'Lusei' clan over the other clans. Under them, the migration continued from the south in a northerly direction till the southern part of present Mizoram was reached. By the year 1780, the Sailo chiefs of the Lusei clan had succeeded in driving out the earlier settlers like the Hrangkhawl, Biate, Thado and other smaller and weaker tribes. The Sailo chiefs finally gained power in the northern part by subduing the remaining kinsmen like the Rivungs, Palias, Rokhums, Zadengs and Tlangluah clan.5

The establishment of the supremacy of the Lusei chiefs encouraged a settled way of life. The Mizos lived in their insulated world, with the chiefs and his council of elders, known as 'Upas' ruling over them. The chief was the custodian of law and the protector of the people, and over a period of time, chieftainship became hereditary.

The history of the Mizos, as already observed, was

5. The main tribal clans are the Lusei, Paite, Ngente, Khawlhring, Khiangte, Rawite, Renthi, Chawngthu, Lakher, Mara, Thado, Pawi, Hmar, Chawlht, Tlau, Zawngte, Vangchhia and Hualngo.
shrouded in mystery prior to any contact with the British. However, much light was shed with the eventual annexation of the hills by the British. The British relations with the Mizos had a tremendous impact on their political, social and economic way of life. It brought them into close contact with the civilised western world, and infused new ideas and ideologies which greatly influenced them. To a large extent, the genesis of the Mizo insurgency had its roots during the British annexation of the hills. Therefore, it is imperative to study the period for a better understanding of the emergence of insurgency.

THE BRITISH ANNEXATION

The first expedition against the Mizos was carried out on 14 January, 1850 under Colonel Lister, the Political Agent of the Khasi Hills. There were a series of expedition against the tribesmen who continued their raids into the plains. 6 The Mizo hills was finally brought under British control in 1895. 7

6. Expeditions were carried out extensively during the period 1871-72, 1888-89.

7. In 1890, the Mizo Hills was divided into two administrative units, North Lushai Hills under the Chief Commissioner of Assam and SouthLushai Hills under the Lt. Governor of Bengal. In 1898, the two units were merged and formed a district of Assam under a superintendent.
The British introduced important changes in the hills. The most significant contribution was the introduction of a written script in 1895 in Roman script. This encouraged the people and aroused their curiosity of the outside world other than their own. The ability to read and write, although limited, paved the way for the political consciousness of the people.

The British also introduced a written customary law. The laws were earlier interpreted by the chiefs according to his own will and it resulted in confusion and lack of uniformity. The handicap was removed by the British with the introduction of 'Monograph of Lushai customs and ceremonies' under Mr. N.E. Perry, the then Superintendent.

The most significant contribution was however in the field of religion. Before the advent of the British, the Mizos were animist who worshipped the forces of nature. They believed in the existence of good and evil spirits and their beliefs centred in appeasing the evil spirits to prevent any harm befalling them. They also believed in 'the existence of one supreme God, a god of all humanity and goodness; but their spiritual repose was disturbed by spirits of evil known as RAMHUAIS, who had to be propitiated perpetually, so that KHUAHVANG, the spirit of kindness and...
magnamity, could bring comfort. 8

The Christian missionaries brought about a radical change in the beliefs of the people. They took the dual responsibility of education and proselytizing. In the northern part, the missionary work was carried out by the Welsh Mission and in the south by the London Baptists. 9 The missionaries had to overcome innumerable setback, but their determination bore fruit and today, Mizoram is a Christian state and in 1994, celebrated hundred years of Christianity. The coming of Christianity changed their way of life and brought about an awareness and a developed sense of being. Christianity, in the later course of the Mizo history, had a prominent role, as a factor which contributed much to the alienation of the Mizos from the Indian fold.

The Mizo Hills, under the British developed in its own unique manner and the introduction of Christianity and education gave birth to an enlightened group of people who were keen to take the reins of their future into their own hands. The political situation in the country prior to independence, did not directly affect the hills but there


9. The first Christian missionaries were Lorrain and Savidge. Christians in Mizoram today belong to different denominations. Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholics, Seven Day Adventist, United Pentecostal Church and Salvation Army.
developed a sense of concern and anxiety of the future status of the hills in independent India.

There were various options put forward for the future of the Mizo hills. In 1941, it was proposed to combine the hill districts of the northeast into a separate province and called the North-Eastern Frontier Province. However, the plan under Sir Robert Reid was rejected. Further, under Sir Reginald Coupland, the creation of a sub-province for the hill areas of Assam was put forward. This was known as the Coupland plan.¹⁰

The events of the time had by then moved forward. The imminent independence of India and the handing over of power to the Indians by the British continued to sow doubts in the minds of the Mizos. The educated leaders were apprehensive and concerned. The political party, the Mizo Union (MU) voiced their desire to separate from India.¹¹ Proposals to merge with Myanmar were also put forward. There gradually emerged feelings of uncertainty if the Mizo hills was clubbed together with Assam even after independence. The

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¹⁰ Sir Robert Reid was the Governor of Assam then.

¹¹ The Mizo Union was formed on 9 April 1946 and was the first political organisation in the state. The Mizo Union was originally a constituent part of the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (A.P.H.L.C.) who spearheaded the movement for the formation of a hill state comprising of those in Assam.
interests of the Mizos were sought to be looked into with the adoption of the MacDonald Scheme.

The MacDonald Scheme created the District Conference in 1946. The District Conference was composed of forty members, of which twenty were elected by the Chiefs and the rest by the commoners. The powers of the chiefs were curtailed to a large extent by the introduction of the District Council, which encouraged political activity among the people.

The Mizo Union (M.U.) took charge of the District Administration. But cracks had begun to develop within the party. The MU split up into two factions, led by Dengthuama, Khawtinkhuma, Saprawnga, H.K. Bawichhuaka and Vanthuama versus the group led by Pachhunga, Lalmawia, Lalbiakthanga and Rev. Zairema. Differences had cropped up in relation to the position of the chiefs and the question of Mizo hills in free India. The District Council demanded representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly by three Mizos. There were further demand for self-determination within Assam and the retention of sole proprietary right over land. The seeds of discontent with the existing pattern was sown during this crucial period. The numerous options led to indicisive conclusions which left many people dissatisfied.

The independence of India was not viewed with much
enthusiasm in the Mizo Hills, as it continued to be a district of Assam. It was untouched by the freedom movement to experience any sense of joy and appreciation. A few scheme of administration of the Hill Districts based on the recommendations of the North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, known as the Bordoloi Committee, was incorporated in the Part 'A' of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. As a result, the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council for Pawi, Lakher and Chakma tribes were set up in 1952 and 1953 respectively with 24 members, of whom autonomous administration over the traditional ways and affairs of the tribes and make such changes as they themselves might like to introduce.12

The interests of the Mizos were sought to be protected and to provide them with opportunities to preserve their customs, culture and traditions according to their own interests. The union with Assam, in spite of such assurances did not meet the aspirations of the people and it laid the foundation for the insurgency movement which broke out later.

THE FAMINE, 1958-59

The history of Mizoram is vividly marked by the events of the famine which broke out late 1958. The impact of the famine had far-reaching consequences which turned the tide of Mizo history into a turbulent phase.

The famine, known locally as 'Mau-Tam' is a unique occurrence and according to the Mizos, it occurs approximately every fifty years. It had ravaged the hills in 1862 and 1910 in the past and the famine is predicted for the year 2007 A.D. The term 'Mau' means bamboo and 'Tam' means the ravages of famine.

The bamboos covering Mizo hills flower and bear fruits at interval of fifty years. The fruits fall to the ground and were devoured by rodents who multiplied in great numbers due to the easy availability of the fruits. The increase in their numbers led to the devastation of all standing crops. Paddy fields were destroyed and the rice stalks were completely devoured. It was estimated that the rodents destroyed as much as twenty acres of standing paddy crops in one single night. The cultivated fields were completely ravaged and in the face of such destruction, the people faced famine of devastating scale. They suffered greatly and especially in the interior village, life was extremely
harsh and difficult, resulting in starvation and death.

The post-famine developments acted as a catalyst to the chain of events which occurred soon after. In the wake of the famine, the Mizo leaders of the District Council alerted the Government of Assam for immediate relief measures. Reports of starvation and deaths were sent to the government to speed up emergency work. However, the Assam Government did not heed their appeal and practically turned a blind eye to the events in the hills. The little measures undertaken were grossly inadequate and inefficient.

The attitude of the Assam Government was deeply resented by the Mizo leaders who had placed good faith in it. The resentment and grievances percolated down to the masses and proved their age old apprehensions to be true. The insensitivity of the Assamese to their situation angered and offended the sensibility of the people beyond repair. Moreover, the Assam Official Language Act, which was passed in 1961 was instrumental in generating widespread agitation against it.

BIRTH OF THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT

It was at this critical juncture, that a non-political organization under John F. Maliana was set up. The new organisation was called the Mizo Cultural Society and it was
concerned with the promotion of culture. However, it was soon converted into a welfare organisation to help the famine-stricken people and it was converted to the Mizo National Famine Front (M.N.F.F.). Laldenga, who was to later influence the political course of the Mizo history was elected the Secretary of the new organisation, whose basic aim continued to be relief-work for the people.

The M.N.F.F. gained immense popularity with the people as a result of the measures undertaken to assist them. They were grateful to their leaders for coming to their aid when the Assam Government had ignored their appeal. The situation was ideal for men like Laldenga to gain immense popularity which stood him in good stead in the following years. The end of the famine resulted in the conversion of the M.N.F.F. into a political party, and it was re-christined Mizo National Front (M.N.F.) on 22 October, 1961. Laldenga was elected President of the M.N.F. and the headquarters at Aizawl town. The M.N.F. took to active politics and gained ground especially among the youths. Laldenga was a great orator who could mesmerize the audience with his speeches, which were injected with nationalistic fervour.

In 1963, the M.N.F. won two seats in the Assam Legisla-

13. General Secretary was S. Lianzuala, Joint Secretary was A. Rochnuna.
tive Assembly bye-elections. In 1963, the M.N.F. won 145 seats in the Village Council elections. Gradually, the M.N.F. widened its support base and there was a marked shift in its activities. There emerged a definite change in the pursuit of its aims and objectives. The emphasis was placed on secession from the Indian Union and the M.N.F. began a well orchestrated plan in propagating their ideals.

The M.N.F. set in motion its plans to convince the people of the urgent need to break away from India. They issued pamphlets, leaflets, books etc. which contained anti-Indian views and stand, which highlighted the innumerable differences between the Mizos and the rest of India. So long the M.N.F. did not harbour the pursuit of an independent state, their appeal lay in their service to their brethren socially and politically. However, with the change in perception and priority, they embarked on a different road of campaign to arouse the common man's interest and sustained support. Laldenga and his men stepped up their activities throughout the hills. The M.N.F. at the initial stage, did not follow armed and violent means to realise the goal of free and independent Mizoram. In the M.N.F. memorandum, the party had stated that 'the Mizos commit them-

14. The Mizo Union got 228 seats, the Congress 16, Independent-10 and EITU-12.
selves to a policy of non-violence in their struggle and have no intention of employing any other means to achieve their political demands'. However, in the long run, it proved to be a mere cloak to cover plans of an armed rebellion.

OPERATION JERICHO AND ITS AFTERMATH

The M.N.F. open armed rebellion which broke out on 28 February, 1966 was code-named Operation Jericho. The towns of Lunglei and Champhai were completely overrun by the M.N.F. battalions. The Aizawl Treasury and telephone exchange was also attacked. However, the MNF failed to capture Aizawl, the capital. There was a lack of co-ordination between the groups who were entrusted with the job. The Treasury was taken over by one group but the hold could not be consolidated because the back-up could not arrive due to the accidental explosion of a grenade which resulted in the death of one of them. The attack was carried out again on 3 March 1966. But it was too late as the IAR were fully prepared to combat the MNF forces. The formal declaration of independence was made on 1 March, 1966 and set up a

15. The M.N.F. organised its volunteers into seven battalions and they were further grouped into two brigades, the Dagger Brigade and the Lion Brigade.
shadow government and called it the 'Mizoram Sawrkar'.

The functions of the new government and its organisation was based on the pattern of the Government of USA. The Constitution of the M.N.F. provided a separate Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. The new government appealed for allegiance from the people and to stand up for their rights in the face of hostile Indian domination. The M.N.F. had declared open war against the Indian Government and it was imperative that the common man supported their activities for the fulfilment of its aims and objectives.

The M.N.F. and the movement it spearheaded was the outcome of many factors but the immediate catalyst was the occurrence of the famine and the general apathy that was shown towards the Mizo Hills. The consequent insurgency phase that continued for more than two decades severely hampered the growth and development but it was fought by the M.N.F. with good faith and intention to do away with the injustice that was meted out towards them. There was a firm belief that their total freedom lay only in an sovereign independent Mizoram.

16. See Appendix for the text of declaration of independence.
NAGALAND

Nagaland is surrounded by Assam in the west, Manipur in the south and Arunachal Pradesh in the north. It is situated between 25 6' and 27 4' parallels of the equator and 93 20' and 95 15' meridian east of Greenwich, and covering an area of 16,488 km. According to the 1991 Census, Nagaland has a population of 1,215,573 people. The density being 73 per sq. km. Beside the Nagas in Nagaland there are sizeable Naga population in Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. The political division of the Nagas has given rise to problems which has had a significant impact on other north-eastern states, for it was here that the stirrings of 'nationalism' had its roots, and which spread over the entire north-east.

The outbreak of insurgency has to be traced in the context of developments which took place in the Naga Hills prior to independence. Its emergence was a gradual process and the contributing factors are closely interwoven with the historical process and political assertion of the people. A better understanding of the problem requires a look into history.

Nagaland Under the British

The British established effective administration in
part of Nagaland in 1877. The next year Kohima was established as the chief administrative centre. Once the Government established its Head-quarter at Kohima inside Naga Hills, its territory extended gradually by annexing one village after another. The main objective of the British administration was to check the raids carried out by Nagas on British territory. The British initially left the Naga tribes to themselves. They were concerned in consolidating their hold over Assam due to its vast economic potential in the tea-industry. Earlier, the Naga tribes were left to the Manipuri and Cachari kings for subjugation. However, the British could not ignore the Nagas for a very long time. Primarily, that was due to the numerous raids carried out by them on the tea-gardens. The British realised that for reasons of strategy and security, they could not afford to ignore the intervening areas, whether populated by barbarious tribes, wild beasts, dense forests, or arid land. The British were also keen to find a suitable route between Assam and Manipur, which was possible only through the Naga territory.

17. Alemchiba Ao, n.1, p.100.

The first British expedition through the Naga territory was led by Captain Jenkins and Captain Pemberton in 1832. The expedition was the first in a series of expeditions to be sent into the Naga territory before it was finally annexed.\textsuperscript{19} The numerous expeditions resulted in severe loss of lives and property for both sides that eventually, the British adopted a change of policy towards the Naga hills. The British withdrew their troops from the hills and determined that in future they would abstain from all interference with the Nagas. The policy, as laid down by Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor General, was: "Hereafter we should confine ourselves to our own ground; protect it as it can and must be protected; not meddle in the feuds or fights of these savages; encourage trade with them, as long as they are peaceful towards us; and rigidly exclude them from all communication, either to sell what they got, or to buy what they want, if they should become turbulent or troublesome.\textsuperscript{20}

However, this was easier said than done. The Nagas continued to raid the plains, and it was found necessary to find an alternative method of dealing with them. The policy of non-interference failed to bring the desired results and the British had to reconsider their options once again.

\textsuperscript{19} ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} ibid., p.21.
The Government established a post at Samaguting in 1866, which was placed under the command of Lieutenant Gregory, who had a force of 150 hill men under his command. The new post was to act as a barrier to prevent future Naga intrusion into the plains. The gradual annexation of the Naga hills began from this point of events, and it culminated in the occupation of Kohima in 1878 and the Naga Hills was finally annexed.

The British introduced certain policies in the Naga Hills over the years of their rule. In 1874, under the Scheduled District Act, the Naga Hills was declared as a 'Scheduled District' and was thus, excluded from the jurisdiction of the laws operating throughout the rest of British India. In 1919, the Naga Hills was declared as 'Backward Tract' under Government of India Act, 1919. Under this any Act passed by the Indian Legislature would not be applicable to the Naga Hills District. Furthermore, on March 3, 1936, the Naga Hills was further declared as an 'Excluded Area' under the Government of India Order, 1936. Although the Naga Hills were declared to be an excluded area, yet the executive authority of the province of Assam extend to these hills.21

21. ibid., p.21.
The dawn of the Indian Independence brought about a flurry of activities in Nagaland. This was particularly so, in relation to the future status of the Naga Hills with the impending British withdrawal. The Nagas had made much political headway and progress under the British administration and clubs had been formed which spoke of the high intellectual level the Nagas had attained. In 1918, in Kohima and Mokokchung the 'Naga Club' was founded. In 1923, the Lothas formed a council and the Ao Tribal Council was formed in 1928. In 1945, under C.R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, the 'Naga Hills District Council' was set up. These organisations raised the political consciousness of the people was binding force amongst the Naga tribes. They were preparing themselves politically in the event of India gaining her independence from the British - a happening they then visualised as being imminent. 22 The leaders were aware of the challenges that were in store for the Naga Hills and were keen to resolve the situation with the best interests of the Nagas at heart.

Unlike their Mizo brethren who organised themselves

under the M.N.F. banner only in the 1960's, the Naga 'nationalists', were much active prior to India's independence in their endeavour to remain outside the domain of the Indian Union. They were prepared to remove all obstacles which stood in their way.

The Simon Commission

On 10 January, 1929 the statutory commission led by Sir John Simon and Clement Atlee visited Kohima. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Commission which specifically stated the desire of the Naga people to be independent from India. The memorandum was also vocal in expressing the differences which existed between the tribals and the plainsmen in terms of race, culture, tradition, religion and language. The memorandum pleaded that 'we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we are never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times'. The demand clearly indicated that the Nagas as early as 1929 had demanded to be free from the Indian yoke. Nationalism had manifested itself in the Naga psyche long before India was free from British rule.

23. Memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission on 10 January, 1929 by the Naga Club.
When World War II was over, Mr. Pawsey formed an institution called 'Naga Hills District Tribal Council' in 1945, the main objective of which was to unify the Nagas on modern lines. The institution was rechristened 'Naga National Council' (N.N.C.) on March 1946 at Wokha, and it was to play the most significant role in Naga politics.

The N.N.C. was composed of 29 members who represented the tribes on the principles of proportional representation. Among the members, office bearers were elected. Every citizen was supposed to be a member of the N.N.C. and every family contributed voluntarily towards the maintenance of the council. Contributions ranged anything from Rupee one to a hundred and it was not a political organisation in the sense that it had no paying membership and no pledge for loyalty to the party. The N.N.C. brought together the different tribes on a common platform to express their unity and solidarity with one another as a common whole. It became a unifying force and crossed tribe and clan barriers in the pursuit of a 'Naga Nation'.

The future status of Nagaland was an important issue.

25. ibid., p.165, no.21.
and was given due weightage by the British. Various options were put forward. The Reid and Coupland plan under Sir Reginald Coupland proposed a plan that the Government of India and Myanmar might have a treaty with Britain and that each should take responsibility for the new area. There was also a scheme known as the 'Trust Territory' scheme which was to carve out a trust territory comprising the Naga Hills, the area now forming NEFA and the upper part of Burma inhabited by the tribal people. This scheme was rejected outright by the N.N.C. and the Indian National Congress.26

The N.N.C. was firm in its resolve to establish a sovereign state of Nagaland and they were prepared to pursue their goal. On July 1947, a delegation led by Z.A. Phizo proceeded to New Delhi to assert their intention of opting out of the prospective Indian Union. The Naga delegation met leaders like Jinnah and Gandhi and tried to impress them with their demand. However, they were bitterly disillusioned in the face of the Congress policy as advocated by Pandit Nehru. He said, "you can never hope to be independent. No state big or small in India will be allowed to remain independent. We will use all our influence and power

26. The options put forward could not meet the political demand of the people and it proved unfeasible for the Government to pursue.
to suppress such tenderness'.

Further, on 1 August, 1946, Pandit Nehru in a letter to the Secretary of the N.N.C., Mr. T. Sakhrie stated that 'it is obvious that the Naga territory in Eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically... this Naga territory must form part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close associations'.

However, it was not an argument, the Naga leaders were willing to accept. The N.N.C.'s patience was severely tested and doubts arose to the exact nature of the Congress leaders genuine regard towards the Naga Hills. They were not willing to be pacified with assurances and promises of what was thought best for them. The voice of dissent gained ground and the more radical members became vocal in the demand for immediate independence. The Government of India set up the 'Advisory Committee on the Aboriginal Tribes' and the committee visited Kohima on 20 May, 1947. The Naga National Council put forth their demand:

1. The Interim Government of the Naga people will rule over all the people of Nagaland, having full powers in respect of Legislation, Executive and Judiciary.

2. Nagaland belong to the Naga people and will be inali-

enable.

3. The Interim Government of the Naga people will have full powers in the matters of raising revenue and expenditure, an annual subvention to cover the deficit being given by the Guardian power.

4. For defence and aiding civil power in case of emergency a force considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian Power.

The deadlock continued and in June 1947, the N.N.C. issued a declaration that the Naga Hills would cease to be a part of India with the independence of the latter round the corner. The charismatic leader Z.A. Phizo began to strongly advocate the establishment of a sovereign independent state and actively pursued its realization. He gained enough support to be elected President of the N.N.C. in 1949, and quickly infused the organization with his brand of nationalism and patriotic fervour for a 'Naga nation'.

The political developments took place rapidly. The impasse was sought to be resolved through fresh initiative and goodwill. The effort proved successful to a limited extent and the process came to be known as the Hyadari Agreement.
HYDARI AGREEMENT

The Naga question remained unresolved and eluded solution. Fresh attempts were made through the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari to resolve the deadlock. An agreement of sort was reached after holding talks for three consecutive days on 27, 28 and 29 June, 1947. This agreement came to be known as "Nine-point Hydari Agreement". The agreement, however, in totality solved nothing and the problems remained basically as they were with no positive change. The controversial point was the difference between the Indian Government and the NNC leaders in the interpretation of Article 8 which stated that:

"The Government of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observation of this agreement, at the end of this period, the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period, or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people arrived at." The N.N.C. leaders were of the belief that the Nagas after the agreed ten years would have a choice of opting out of the Indian Union. However, as interpreted by the Indian Government, `the intention of the article was that at the end of the ten years the Nagas would be free to suggest
changes in the administrative pattern.28 Thereafter the deadlock continued over the issue of Naga independence resulting in the growth of extremists within the N.N.C. for immediate independence of Nagaland.

The Hydari Agreement was followed by a series of initiatives on both sides to resolve the issue without any measurable success. The crisis deepened with both sides taking a firm stand which eventually led to open armed conflict.

**Outbreak of Conflict**

The growing confrontation escalated during Nehru's visit to Kohima along with Burmese Premier U Nu on 10 March, 1953. The Naga leaders were refused audience by the Prime Minister to voice their demands and in retaliation, they staged a walk out during the address of the Prime Minister during a public function. This resulted in the immediate crackdown on suspected *perpetrators* and leaders of the N.N.C. There was no turning back now for the N.N.C. and the decision was taken to go underground to evade the arrests. The underground Nagas had begun their movement more by accident than by design.29

29. ibid., p.55.
Naga Federal Government

On March 1956, a historic event took place in the history of the Naga hills whereby the N.N.C. founded the Naga Federal Government (NFG) to whom the people were to owe allegiance. The Federal Government also framed a constitution. The Federal Government declared:

- Land belongs to the people and will remain so. There will be no land tax, and other forms of taxation will be formulated by different administrative units.

- All forms of trade, business, industry, transport and other public utility will be free and will be in the hands of the people. Religion will be free.

- Each Naga village is a republic in its own right. Each Naga family or tribe occupies its own distinct region, and shall continue as before to exercise full authority over its own affairs, including land, community organisations, social and religious practices and customs.

- Men and women above 22 years of age will have equal rights of voting. There will be equal wages for equal work irrespective of sex.

The formation of the new 'government' was an act of defiance and a deliberate rejection of the authority of the Government of India. The future course of political action
was to be under the NFG since it was recognised as the legitimate representative of the Naga people. The NFG was supported by the 'Naga Home Guard' in matters of defence and protection.

The demand for an independent sovereign state of Nagaland was not an isolated demand by the N.N.C. and its followers. There was widespread support from the masses, which vindicated the stand taken by their leaders. A number of educated people, trained compounders and nurses, and some influential village elders joined the movement. The response to the N.N.C. was voluntary and an expression of the desire of the Naga people to be free from the domination of India.

The conflict which broke out between the Nagas and Indian Government was to continue in an endless cycle of insurgency and counter-insurgency. The N.N.C. which spearheaded the movement with the declaration of independence on 14 August, 1947 was looked upon by all Nagas as the true representative of their aspiration. Under the N.N.C., the Naga struggle for a Naga nation was actively pursued.

In 1952, a Civil Disobedience Movement was launched and it goes to the credit of the N.N.C. the overwhelming response it generated among the people. There was also a total boycott of the Indian General Elections (1952) as the
N.N.C. had declared the rejection of the Indian Constitution. In 1955, the hostile activities of the insurgents culminated in the leaders and their followers going underground. Z.A. Phizo, the President left for East Pakistan, in November, 1957 to internationalize the Naga cause.

However, in the intervening years between the origin of the Naga Movement and the actual outbreak of conflict, important developments took place within the N.N.C. There was a growing clash of interests and vision in the top echelons of the organisation. The most striking confrontation developed between the President Z.A. Phizo and his most trusted aide, Secretary, T. Sakhrie who began to question the direction which they were headed in the light of innumerable hardships, violence and death innocent people had to suffer. The clash of ideology resulted in the expulsion of T. Sakhrie from the N.N.C. and led to his eventual assassination allegedly on the orders of the President. The death of T. Sakhrie brought to light the cracks that developed within the N.N.C. The educated Naga leaders were concerned with the developments in the Naga Hills, and they began to look for alternatives.

In 1957, the Naga People's Convention which was composed of a few Naga leaders was formed. The main objective of the NPC was to act as a 'mediator' between the under-
ground leaders and the Government of India. However, in spite of their good intentions, the efforts of the NPC was futile in eliciting positive response from the underground leaders who were skeptical of their true motives. On 21 May, 1958, the NPC appointed a Drafting Committee to bring about a settlement without the consent of the NFG. The 16 point memorandum was finalised and the Government of India accepted the proposals "in principle". The N.N.C. and the NFG rejected outright the memorandum.

The events marked the pattern of crisis the Naga movement was heading. The differences which cropped up among the Nagas extended within the underground ranks to the rift between the overground and underground leaders. However, the most important event to shatter the Naga cause arose from the otherwise united underground circle. The insurgents who had weathered all storms for their cause were threatened ironically, from within.

The unity that had been displayed irrespective of tribal and clan differences among the various Naga tribes was severely challenged through the test of time and the continued political developments. The influence of the Sema tribes eroded with the replacement of General Kaito from the

30. The absence of the NNC and NFG could not legitimise the agreement. The principal body had refused to accept it and had no chance of success.
NFG in 1967. The consequent appointment of Mowu Angami as General of the Naga Federal Army was resented by the Semas. To add to their uneasiness in losing hold, Meniasin Angami replaced Scato Swo Sema and assumed 'overall executive powers'. Moreover, the underground movement saw the emergence of the Tangkhul tribe through the appointment of Z. Ramyo as Home Minister of the NFG and Thuingaling Muivah as General Secretary of the N.N.C. The inter-tribal rivalry was detrimental to the unity of the Nagas.

The most significant split resulted after the signing of the Shillong Accord in November 1975. The Shillong Accord failed to solve the Naga issue. The representatives of the underground failed to receive the full support of their colleagues who downright rejected the accord and the agreement which was settled within the framework of the Indian Constitution. The Naga leaders, after signing the accord went about explaining the ramifications of the accord and trying to convince the insurgents to accept it. The accord sounded the death knell of Naga unity and opened a new direction and chapter in the struggle for a Naga nation.

31. The Shillong Accord was signed on 11 November, 1975, between the Government of India and representatives of the N.N.C. The main terms of the agreement were (a) unconditional acceptance of the Indian Constitution of their own volition, and (b) the surrender of arms. The hardliners could not accept, what they called 'Capitulation to India'.
The Accord was outrightly rejected by Isak, Khaplang and Muivah who saw no other way than to part ways with their erstwhile leader A.Z. Phizo who did not directly and openly reject the accord to their satisfaction. On 31 January 1980, thus the 'National Socialist Council of Nagaland' was born. Isak Chishi Swu was elected Chairman, S.S. Khaplang Vice-Chairman and Th. Muivah, General Secretary. The NSCN declared to the people, 'we assure you once again that we will never relinquish anything of Nagaland's sovereignty to the invaders nor to Phizo and his men, but to the sovereign Naga people alone.'

Th. Muivah and his men were determined to carry on the struggle for Naga independence and end the illegal Indian occupation of their homeland. The NSCN leaders declared, '...we are revolutionary patriots... to us the sovereign existence of our country, the salvation of our people in Socialism with their spiritual salvation in Christ are eternal and unquestionable.'

The NSCN and its members extended across international boundary. The Vice-Chairman, Khaplang belonged to the Hemi tribe of Burma and the combined Naga forces in Burma was placed under the command of Thumbo, who was an important

leader in the Naga Burmese set up. The NSCN further was besetted with the rivalry between S.S. Khaplang and Th. Muivah and it resulted in the break-up of NSCN into NSCN (K) and NSCN (Muivah-Swi) factions. The NSCN (I-S) has emerged as the most striking and dreaded outfit among the insurgency groups in the northeast. The strike capability of the group is enormous and has come to play a key role among insurgency groups by providing training, arms and ammunition in exchange for favours and payment in ready cash. The Naga problem has continued to elude a political solution after more than four decades of violence. It is an ongoing war where the players have increased in numbers and yet, the objective remains unaltered.

ASSAM

Introduction

Assam is the oldest state in the north-east with a rich heritage of history and culture. It is known as the land of blue hills and green valleys, interspersed with majestic rivers and streams. It is bound by Arunachal in the north, Nagaland and Manipur in the east, Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya in the south and has acted as the main link between the northeastern states in terms of communication.

Assam, like other northeastern states experienced much
difficult times in the past, and today it continues to be burdened by problems and the causes are traced back to history of distant past. The major conflicts in Assam which has led to insurgency have had a long historical background which has to be understood, to comprehend the present day turmoil and active militancy.

The Background

Assam was known as Kamrupa in ancient times with Pragjyotispur as its capital. Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese historian provided the first historical account of Assam. He visited ancient Assam during the rein of Kumar Bhaskarvarman. The history of Assam reached its zenith under the Ahoms who ruled for over 600 years. The foundation of the Ahom dynasty was laid by Sukapha in 1228 A.D. The Ahoms came to Assam from the Kingdom of Pong in Upper Irrawady.

The Ahom rule was marked by smooth administrative set-up, their revenue collection just and their council of ministers efficient. They had to struggle hard to subdue the powerful Kachari and Bodo tribes. However, the Ahoms followed a just and tolerant policy towards these tribes.

Assam, under the Ahoms attracted the attention of the

33. Sanjoy Hazarika, Strangers of the Mist, Viking, New Delhi, 1994, p.41.
Mughals who were keen to extend their kingdom eastwards. Mir Jumla, the Nawab of Bengal in 1662, routed the Ahom army and penetrated into the Ahom capital, Gargaon. The expedition, however, had to be aborted following heavy monsoon and the threat of mutiny from the soldiers who could not tolerate the climate and were affected by diseases. The Mughal expeditions continued and the famous Battle of Sagraighat was fought between Ram Singh, a general sent by Aurangzeb and Lachit, the Barphukan of Gauhati. The Ahoms routed the Mughals in the battle.

The repeated invasion of the Mughals brought the first Muslim settlers in Assam. The Muslim settlers blended well with the culture and everyday life of Assam. Some of them had also acquired the confidence of the Ahom kings and were given titles of officials such as 'Phukan', 'Barua', 'Saikia', 'Bora', 'Hazarika', 'Khonikar' etc. The Ahom king Rudra Singha had also imported skilled Muslim personnel in certain trades including blacksmithy, architecture, Persian translation, tailoring, painting, drum-beating etc.34 There was thus, a kind of willing assimilation on the part of the Muslims with the people of Assam. Importantly, there were some who converted to the Muslim faith, Islam. The accept-

ance of Assamese culture by the early Muslims and their participation in its promotion had also set in motion the process of secularisation in Assam and the very fact that both the religious communities shared the common official titles bear an ample testimony to their shared heritage.\textsuperscript{35} There was mutual exchange in dress, literature etc. Books were translated from Assamese to Urdu and vice versa. The great saint Sankardeva and Madhavdeva were the first to use Arabic words in their literary works. Nabin Chandra Bordoloi had translated 'Hatematai' from Urdu to Assamese. 'Baharisthane' was translated by Dr. Moyidul Islam in Assamese language.

The Muslims were not looked upon as different from the Assamese identity and were regarded as 'indigenous Muslims'.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, they actively involved themselves with the bureaucracy and other fields and in turn were highly regarded by the local people. The Muslims settlers were relatively small in number, and so any kind of threat was not perceived by the Assamese.

The history of Assam was most significantly shaped by the British who gained control over the state by the Treaty

\textsuperscript{35} ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{36} ibid., p.1.
of Yandaboo, 1826. The Burmese entered Assam in 1817 and took advantage of the weak Ahom kings by establishing their rule through a puppet king, Raja Chandrakanta. However, with the departure of the Burmese, there was chaos and disorder in the Ahom court and the king was deposed. The way was paved for Purandar Singha to ascend the throne. The events resulted in the return of the Burmese, who let loose a reign of terror.

The Burmese could not establish permanent suzerainty over Assam. They came in confrontation with the British, who were also keen to extend their rule over the fertile Brahmaputra valley. The British proved superior and effectively expelled the Burmese from Assam.

The British rule was largely responsible for the influx of migrants from neighboring Bengal into Assam. The Bengali migrants were highly educated and well versed in English as a result of rich cultural heritage and longer period of being exposed to British rule. Therefore the British administration found this section more suitable for employment as clerks, accountants and artisans. Later, a large number of

37. The treaty stated that, 'There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other'. Article 2 further stated, 'His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interferences.'
literate Bengalis entered Assam to work as lawyers, doctors, engineers and teachers. Consequently the Bengali language came to be the dominant language and it became the language of the courts and the medium of instruction in schools. There was widespread resentment and the Assamese intelligentsia were bitterly affronted by this measure. It was not easy to get Assamese reinstated as the prime language. A sustained campaign by Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan among others, and American Baptist missionaries were the key to overturning of Bengali language as the lingua franca of Assam.

There was also a change of attitude in the political sphere. In the pre-independent era with the Congress at the helm of affairs, Assam was also dominated by the Congress. The Muslims in Assam were in full support of the Congress. The Hindus were also very happy with the Muslim support. This liberal attitude is also perhaps the motivating force in the installation of Syed Abdul Malik to the Presidentship of the Assam Sahitya Sabha notwithstanding his pronounced pro-Pakistani feelings displayed during pre-partition poli-


tics of Assam as President of the Jorhat District Muslim League. However with continued influx of immigrants and partition politics engulfing the country, Assam could not remain untouched. This led to emergence of communal differences between the two communities.

Further the continuous influx of immigrants and their growing presence in the agricultural field was upsetting the balance of the economy. By dint of their hard work, most of them had become peasant proprietors from their landless origin. Through their entrepreneurial quality they had acquired for them a new socio-economic status and there is no gain saying the fact that they constitute the backbone of Assam's economy. For example, the credit for producing nearly 20 per cent of India's total jute in Assam can be wholly attributed to the immigrant Muslims.

Last but not the least, there was the needling problem known as the 'Line System'. The Line System was a short title for the system by which Muslim immigrants from Bengal, especially from the district of Mymensingh were required to settle in certain definite areas of the Assam Valley districts and were not allowed to take settlement of land under

41. ibid., pp.6-7.
the government in other areas.\textsuperscript{42} It was an attempt to keep the immigrants away from the local people as well as the hill tribals. Besides controlling the settlement of immigrants, the Line System was also intended to prevent fraud committed by the Revenue officials.\textsuperscript{43} Abdul Matin Choudhury of the Muslim League in 1937 stated, "This is a system of racial prerogative, a system of economic exploitation for which you won't find a parallel anywhere in India".\textsuperscript{44} The Line System proved to be a bone of contention with the immigrants calling for its abolition and the Assamese calling for its retention. It also generated intense political debates and it dominated Assam politics for over twenty-five years which caused tension and distrust between the two communities.

The tension was aggravated by the active and vocal politics of the Muslim League in Assam. Prior to the election of 1937, there was no Muslim League Organisation in the Brahmaputra Valley.\textsuperscript{45} There were minor groups like the Assam Valley Muslim Party under Md. Tayabulla, and the Muslim League was of little importance under Abdul Matin

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} ibid., p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{43} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{44} \textit{The Assam Gazette}, Part VI, no.III, 5 May, 1937, p.304.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Dev and Lahiri, n.34, p.60.
\end{itemize}
Choudhury. However, with increased influx, the immigrants were able to apply political pressure through their leaders who relentlessly fought for the rights of the immigrants. The name of Moulana Bhasani was most prominent. In May 1946, Bhasani undertook fast unto death to pressurize the Government of Assam to stop the eviction of immigrants. Under his Presidency in April 1944, there rose a movement for the inclusion of Assam in Pakistan. Thus, the problem of Muslim immigrants in Assam hastened up the movement and intensified the hostility towards the Line System as a part of the battle cry for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{46} The turn of events was beyond the tolerance of the Assamese population.

Consequently, the division between the two communities widened further and the economic, social and political factors added fuel to the fire, from which there was no turning back. There arose a complex situation, where the Assamese felt threatened in every aspect of their lives by the influx of the immigrants in hordes, and similarly the immigrants were fearful of the assimilation process perceived them by them. This basic confrontation escalated to huge proportions and eventually led to the students' agitation which spread from 1979 to 1985, and in turn the genesis of the ULFA also originated here.

\textsuperscript{46} ibid., p.73.
The Students Movement

The student movement in Assam marked an important phase in the socio-political developments. The unity witnessed and expressed through the student led agitation was a remarkable achievement and accomplishment for the Assamese people. The agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) received full support from regional parties the Jatiyatabadi Dal, Purbachaliya Lok Parishad, Assam Yuva Samaj, Young Lawyer Forum and the Assam Sahitya Sabha. Different sections of society joined hands through these organisations as a united whole.

On 27 August, 1979, the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) was formed, consisting of the AASU, the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the Jatiyatabadi Dal. The Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad, Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad, Assam Gana Samaj and the Young Lawyers Forum were among those who also joined the AAGSP. The advisers of AASU were Lalit Rajkhowa and K.A. Sarma among others. The AASU movement gave birth to different trends in Assam, many people were influenced by the movements' activities or were inspired by the aspirations of the students' union.\(^\text{47}\)

\(^{47}\) H.N. Rafiabadi, n.38, p.13.
The immediate cause of the agitation was the outcome of the events which followed the death of Hiralal Patwari. In April 1979, the Election Commission began the business of updating the Mangaldoi Parliamentary Constituency electoral roll with a view to holding poll to fill the seat later in the year. The process continued through May. Numerous complaints came to the electoral officers alleging that a number of foreigners' had been placed on the voters' list. The complaints gradually increased as more and more indigenous people took courage and began reporting the presence of the immigrants and objecting to their names on the rolls. Within a short span of time, as many as 70,000 complaints were registered against alleged foreigners. After a close scrutiny of the objections, the Election Commission ruled that they were valid in more than 45,000 cases. This meant that 64.28 per cent of the changes were upheld. The question began perturbing the minds of the people, that if this was the case in a single constituency, what about the other constituencies. After decades of deep rooted fears the Assamese society received a jolt when the actual extent was visible for all to see. It was felt that there was an urgent need to stop the trend once and for all by the educated elites.

The All Assam Students Union (AASU) took an active lead
in organising a positive movement to weed out the 'foreigners' from the electoral lists. The regional parties like the Jatiyatabadi Dal, the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad, the Assam Sahitya Sabha also pulled in their lot behind the AASU. Within a short time after the Mangaldoi issue, the AASU and the regional parties jointly demanded a detailed and thorough study of the electoral lists in the remaining 13 parliamentary constituencies. The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Shaikhdar responded to the request, and his orders reflected what he had outlined to the Chief Electoral Officers of the various states the previous October. He ordered scrutiny of rolls and a beginning was made in the constituencies of Nowgong, Barpeta, Kokarajhar and the Autonomous Hill District.48

Demands of the AASU

The AASU and AAGSP spearheaded the movement which received the support of the organisations and the people of Assam. The movement was organised in a systematic manner and the mass rally held on 6 November, 1979 at Judges Field in Guwahati, was a testimony to the preparedness of the Assamese people to ensure the success of the movement. The

The main demands of the students were -

1. All foreign nationals must be detected and deported from our country.

2. (a) Names of foreign nationals must be removed from the concerned electoral rolls before holding any election in Assam.

(b) Inclusion of foreign nationals' names in the electoral rolls in future must be made impossible with the help of an adequate and strong machinery.

3. The border of India with neighbouring countries must be sealed to check infiltration.

4. Necessary constitutional safeguards should be provided to the people of the north-eastern region for the next 15-20 years by making necessary constitutional provisions for the protection of the identity of the indigenous people of the region.

5. The Government of Assam should be free to reject any certificate issued by the district authorities of West Bengal and Tripura.

6. We demand that the authority to grant citizenship certificates delegated to the state government should be withdrawn by the Central Government, so that those foreigners who are detected and deported from Assam do not come back armed with citizenship certificate issued
by other States.

7. Fresh nominations must be invited when election for Karbi Anglong and North Cachar is announced after detection of foreigners and their deportation.

The main demand of the AASU and AAGP was the detection of foreign nationals on the basis of the 1951 National Register of Citizens (NRC), their deportation and disfranchisement by striking their names off the electoral rolls. The cut off year became the most controversial issue in the students' agitation. If the cut off year is 1951, then detection of foreigners who had come in the past 33 years would prove to be a literally impossible affair, apart from the tragic consequence of uprooting human beings who had settled for a long period. Again if the cut off year is 1961 then Bangladesh would refuse to accept any obligations because the country then did not exist and negotiations would then be necessary with the Pakistan Government which would be, to say the least, futile. Even the selection of 1971 as the cut off year would prove to be nothing more than a paper solution. The AASU was in no way willing to accept anything other than 1951 as the cut off year and this was not acceptable to the Union Government. The deadlock resulted in a series of agitations which paralysed the

49. Dev and Lahiri, n.34, p.11.
entire state. All possible steps and measures were adopted by the leaders of the movement to pressurize the government to concede to their demands - satyagraha, picketing, boycott etc. The most prominent measure was the oil blockade to the rest of the country from the 'oil refineries'. The AASU prevented the crude oil from being taken out of Assam. The transportation of jute, bamboo and plywood were also blocked.

The student movement which engulfed the state for six years was the outcome of decades of suppressed anger in the face of threat to the socio-economic life of the people. It was not a movement led by the students in isolation. It cut through the social fabric of the Assamese by whipping up emotions to a frenzy and gave the movement the momentum it needed. The movement was a reflection of the aspirations of the people as a whole. The Assam movement witnessed one of the most significant mass upsurge where the involvement of the people was overwhelming and spontaneous.

The leadership of the AASU was instrumental in involving the whole of Assam in the movement. It was easily the most powerful organisation of students in the state with a membership which covers the vast majority of the school and college students, and its popularity springs from its involvement in issues of immediate and direct appeal to the
sentiments of the Assamese people.\textsuperscript{50} The call for employment of the local people, the preservation of the Assamese language and culture, better deal for Assam in her domestic productions of soil, plywood, tea etc. were closely identified by the people which resulted in all out support to the movement.

The students were not the only enthusiastic participants. There was a definite support among the bureaucratic circles even. In fact, the whole Assamese intelligentsia. Wide ranging support were given to the call for boycott of offices, banks, and educational institutions. The government came down heavily on the government servants with suspensions, disciplinary proceedings and even dismissals.

The movement also received full support from the Assam Sahitya Sabha, a premier literary-cultural organisation. It was not restricted to the general public, but made inroads among the educated and intellectual elites which speaks of the popular base the movement enjoyed.

The movement was basically an Assamese speaking peoples' upsurge. However, it was succeeded in enlisting the support of the hill tribals particularly the Bodos and Karbis - an indication of active involvement of the tribal

\textsuperscript{50} Udayon Mishra, \textit{North-East India: Quest for Identity}, Omsons Pub., New Delhi, 1988, p.78.
population of the state in the agitation.51

The AASU-led agitation to press for the fulfilment of their demands was a united force involving the population from all walks of life. The long drawn six years united effort finally gave way to the signing of the Assam Accord in 1986 which was jubilantly celebrated all over the state. The popular support to the movement played the most significant role.

Rise of Militancy, ULFA

The students' agitation much as it tried to follow the Gandhian form, could not remain so, in the course of the movement's history. The movement saw many young people sacrificing their lives and resulted in untold sufferings for the people as a whole. The movement at times, was not keeping pace with what the hardliners wanted to achieve. There were a number of radicals within the AASU, who regarded militancy to be more effective in pressurising the government to concede to their demands. The rise of the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) was the direct offshoot of the students' agitation.

The ULFA movement, during its initial phase was not

51. ibid., p.79.
militant as it is today. It was comprised more or less of a group of radicals who saw to it to be their duty to put pressure on the government for a more speedy solution to Assam's problems. The ULFA members were mostly from AASU and according to a Guwahati academic they were the best and the brightest.\textsuperscript{52} The ULFA leaders were also quick to state that ULFA was not an extremist outfit but a people's movement. Mr. Siddhartha Phukan, Convenor of the outfit's Central Publicity Cell said, 'we live among the people who are involved with us. Our cadres are now the people of Assam'.\textsuperscript{53} The outfit at first tried to find a firm base among the common people in order to win popular support.

The ULFA leaders and its supporters were more concerned with its social base and widening their sphere of influence. They advocated that the time was not yet ripe to launch an armed struggle. They said that they were more concerned on 'armed propaganda' impressing upon the people of Assam to rebel against the 'colonial Indian state machinery' and seek their due.\textsuperscript{54} However, these were but a cloak to cover up its true aims and objectives which were eventually unfolded.

The first significant move which threw the ULFA into

\textsuperscript{52} Times of India (New Delhi), 29 May 1990.
\textsuperscript{53} Telegraph (Calcutta), 21 Dec. 1989.
\textsuperscript{54} ibid.
the limelight was the assassination of Mr. Kalipada Sen, President of the United Minorities Front of Assam on 17 October, 1986. This was followed by a spate of selective killings, kidnappings, and extortions which threw the state administrative machinery off gear. The ULFA made it obvious that it was abandoning its earlier programme of non-violence. It was clearly embarking on a path of confrontation and defiance.

The ULFA was the outcome of the students movement and even after the Assam Accord was signed, the ULFA cadres continued to infiltrate the AASU rank and file. They carried on their propaganda and recruited members to join them.

**Demands of ULFA**

The students agitation focussed on immediate problems of Assam. However the extremists within the movement began to doubt the genuineness of the Indian Government in solving the social, economic and political problems of the Assamese people. From demands of a better deal for the Assamese, checking of immigrations, employment avenues etc. there was a slow but steady restless and impatience among the extremists. This group formed the ULFA which has today, grown into stature so gigantic, that the state and central governments are kept on their toes.
The ULFA's main demand is the secession of Assam from the rest of the Indian Union. It was launched with the aim of a struggle for national liberation with the active support of the people to achieve a "sovereign socialist Assam, where every citizen will be liable to be fed by the state and have equal status". The ULFA was making promises of a better Assam independent of the Indian State. It was an attempt to enlist the support of the common people giving out hope that their lives would be better off, in free Assam. Their ultimate aim was to achieve social revolution.

The new catch word was 'secessionism' which was a serious turn in the light of extraordinary situation in the north east where insurgency was prevalent practically in all the States.

ULFA in a bid to garner support and popularise their cause took up populist measures which appealed to the common man and his moral sense. The members of the ULFA identified and dealt with bootleggers, drug peddlers, poachers, smugglers, corrupt officials and harassed the business community, especially the Marwari community for 'unethical business practice'. In adopting such measures, the ULFA was in reality running a parallel government where anyone who crossed their path were severely dealt with. The tea gardens of Upper and Lower Assam had to bear the brunt of
extortions from the ULFA and have lost many officials to attacks from them. Moreover, the ULFA has seized about 2,000 licenced arms from the public for their use and failure to comply with such dictate was foolhardy for anyone.

The ULFA has created a tension filled Assam and extended the state machinery beyond its normal course in tackling their activities. The State of Assam had sacrificed much during the students led agitation for over six years. It is notable to ponder as to where will Assam go with the continued militant activities of the ULFA.

It requires skillful handling of the situation by the government. The outbreak of militancy by a group of people cannot be suppressed by indiscriminate use of force and oppression. The situation in Assam today has become volatile and the solution to the problems requires sensitive and genuine regard to the issues raised by the insurgents. The volatile situation in Assam has been compounded with the 'Bodo-land' issue.

ASSAM AND THE BODO ISSUE:

Assam is the home of the indigenous tribe, the Bodos, who belong to the Tibeto-Burman speaking Indo-Mongoloid tribe. They inhabit the northern part of the Brahmaputra, and are concentrated in Goalpara, Kamrup, Korkhrajhar,
Darrang, Dhubri, Barpeta and Sonitpur districts. The Bodos today are at an important phase of their history and development. They are asserting themselves as distinct ethnic identity, separate from that of an Assamese identity. More importantly, a socio-political movement has developed demanding a separate state for the Bodos.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed on February 27, 1967, to organise the plains' tribals into an organised body to demand autonomy for the tribals. The Bodos, under PTCA demanded the formation of Udayachal, an autonomous region. The demand was also spearheaded by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) under the leadership of the late Upendra Nath Brahma, who kept the main body of the ABSU intact, after a split arose in their ranks which was led by Gangadhar Ramchiary.

The main demand of the ABSU were:
1. Creation of a separate state called 'Bodoland' on the North Bank of the river Brahmaputra.
2. Creation of Autonomous District Councils in the tribal dominated areas on the south Bank of the Brahmaputra.
3. Inclusion of Bodo Kacharis of Karbi-Anglong in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

The demand for a separate state stems from the allegedly inadequate facilities to protect the Bodos as an ethnic
minority group in matters of language, culture, religion and development. The Bodos were apprehensive of the influx of immigrants from Bangladesh who had encroached on their land which had threatened their lives economically, and resulted in the loss of their lands.

More importantly, the Bodos were determined to assert themselves politically, economically and ethnically independent of Assamese 'chauvinism'. Resentment against the imposition of Assamese as the state language in 1960 and as the compulsory third language in all secondary schools in 1986 had been brewing. Though both Acts were later revoked, the Bodos were convinced that the Assamese ruling elite were determined to assimilate their language and culture with that of the Assamese. The ABSU had supported the students' agitation in Assam and felt betrayed with the Assam Accord, which they felt did not protect their interests. The earlier joint demand of the AASU and ABSU to evict all non-tribals from tribal areas were not attended to by the AGP Government. The Bodo interests were ignored and many families lost their homes from the forest land under the Assam Accord.

Coupled with the fear of their ethnic identity being lost under Assamese domination, the ABSU demanded a separate homeland which gained momentum and received widespread
support from the Bodo community. There emerged a more militant group, within the ABSU, the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF), who were in favour of extremist measures to press forth their demand.

However, the most militant outfit was the formation of the Bodo Security Force (BSF) who has come to dominate the Bodo land issue problem in the most dramatic manner. The BSF has demanded an independent state for the Bodos, and has established itself as a militant group to propagate and fulfil its demand. The BSF has established links with other insurgent groups, the NSCN and ULFA, making it a dreaded outfit to stalk the northeastern region.

The Bodoland issue has continued to evade a permanent solution. The Bodo Accord (1993) was unable to sort out the issue to the satisfaction of the Bodo leaders. The BSF rejected the Accord and has continued to fight for an independent homeland. The Autonomous Council to be formed was to comprise of 2,200 villages on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. However, there were villages which were non-Bodo in character and the Bodo population was comparatively less to that of other tribal population. Proper demarcation was not possible, which turned the accord into a farce.

The issue continues to plague Assam, having had to bear
the brunt of the ULFA and BSF militant activities. Lives continue to be lost, properties destroyed and the fragile socio-political and economic life of the state continues to be threatened.

MANIPUR

Introduction

Manipur is a beautiful state with a rich cultural heritage. It covers an area of about 7000-8000 square miles and is situated between latitude 24 30' and 25 60' north and longitude 93 10' and 94 50' east. It consists of a large extent of hill country and a relatively small the valley of Imphal.

Manipur is a unique state in more ways than one. It has contributed much to Indian culture by way of its graceful dance popularly known as 'Rasa Dance'. It is here that the game of Polo is believed to have originated. The beautiful Loktak lake is situated here and the Brow Antlered deer is found only in Manipur. It is also famous for its handicrafts.

The population in Manipur comprises of a unique blend of the hill tribals who inhabit the hill areas and the Meteis who live in and around Imphal valley. The concentration of population is in the valley where 11,77,480 lakhs
live as compared to 10,9942 lakhs in the hill areas. According to the 1991 Census, an important feature of the average density of population in the valley, comprising of three districts, Imphal, Thoubal and Bishnupur is above 16 times the average density in the five hill districts, viz., Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Churachandpur. Manipur is inhabited by a myriad of tribes. In the hills there are as many as twenty nine tribes. The hill tribes in the hill region are broadly divided into Naga and Chin Kuki tribes. The Naga tribes are many and the major ones are the Tangkhuls, Mao-Maram, Zeliangrong, Anals, Lamkang, Major-Mongsang etc., and the Chin-Kuki groups are divided into the Hmar, Gangte, Paite, Kuki, Haokip, Mizo (Lushai) and others. The valley is predominantly inhabited by the Meiteis. 55

Manipur, in the 18th century embraced Vaishnavism under Garib Niwaz, one of the most important king in the history of Manipur. Baptized by the Vaishnava missionary, Shantidas Adhikary, who was believed to come from Sylhet, the ancestral home of Shri Chaitanya he declared Vaishnavism as the state religion and advised his subjects to accept it. 56

55. M. Horan, n.3, p.126.
aries has been revealed to us by Lt. Colonel Burney from the original Burmese sources. However, there are certain instances that Hinduism in one form or the other did exist even before the reign of Ghabib Niwaz. The Manipuris, quote the Mahabharat in support of their statement that they were originally Hindus. The legend of Arjuna's marriage with Chitragada, princess of Manipur, if true must have served a good background for the introduction of new Vaishnavism. Charaironghba, the father of Panherba established a temple of Radha Krishna even before the coming of Shantidas. The proof of the revival is so meagre, and the statements in support of the idea that the Hindu religion existed in the country at a very ancient period are so contradictory and unsatisfactory, that there is no hesitation in stating that in every probability, although a spurious and imperfect form of Hinduism may have existed in individual cases previous to the reign of Gharib Niwaz, about 1750 A.D., it was during his reign that the Hindu religion became general, and was adopted by him and by the majority of the people.

57. ibid., p.39.
58. R. Brown, Statistical Account of the Native State, Calcutta, 1874, p.75.
59. ibid., no.13, p.42.
60. R. Brown, n.57, p.75
Manipur, unlike the other north-eastern state was a Hindu state, though Hinduism did not spread to the hill areas. Assimilation with the Indian culture was easier and identification as an Indian was not resented unlike the other tribals. However, it was unfortunate that during this period the sharing of a common identity symbol, that of being a Hindu, with the rest of the country men did not bring the Meiteis any marked economic gains. Moreover, the Meiteis are not included in the Scheduled Tribes unlike the hill tribes. This has in the long run, proved to be a setback, as reservation in jobs is not applicable to them. They feel cheated and aggrieved that in spite of constituting a majority in the state, there are less numbers of officers in the All India Services. There is a feeling among the Meiteis that though they are educationally at a higher level, there is discrimination against them, unintended though it may be, because of their acceptance of the Hindu religion and social structure. There is a growing desire among the Meiteis to do away with Hinduism and revert back to their original religion and culture known as Sana-mahi. Caught between an adopted religion and a traditional


religion, discontentment has seeped in manifests itself in violent expressions.

Along with the demand for the revival of Sanamahi culture, there was a demand for the revival of the Meitei script. Today the official script for the Manipuri language is Bengali which was introduced by the British, in spite of the Meities having an original script. The Manipuris possess a written character of their own, which seems a modification of the Nangir. Much of the original manuscripts were destroyed during the reign of Gharib Nawaz by the Brahmin missionaries. There are very few people who are well-versed in the old script. There are renewed efforts, however, to trace and raise the original scripts.

Besides, a renewed interest in the Manipuri script, there was vocal demand for the inclusion of the Meiteilon language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The delayed action of the government to implement the demand has been a matter of sore point amongst the Meiteis in particular. The Manipuri language has been recognised by the National Sahitya Akademi as one of the modern languages of India. It is the lingua franca for all the diverse tribes in the hill region who speak different dialect making Meiteilon the common and most spoken language. The demand for

63. R. Brown, n.57, p.94.
the inclusion of Manipuri in the Eighth Schedule has been expressed and supported by all leading political parties, student bodies, literary and cultural organisations and the general public. The Meiteis regard the demand as justified and only natural and the slow pace taken by the government has done nothing but alienate the people. The recognition, though, has assuaged the hurt feelings, but the delay had created resentment.

Manipur was integrated with the Indian Union on 15 October 1949. Much expectations were generated with the accession of the princely state, but contrary to such beliefs the people were sorely disappointed with the new status of Manipur in the Indian Union. Manipur was incorporated as Part C State to be administered by the President through a Chief Commissioner to be appointed by him. There was to be a Council of Advisors to assist the Chief Commissioner. The right to make laws for Part C States was left to the Parliament. Such measures did not suit the aspirations of the people who were looking for a responsible and direct ministry.

In 1965, following the 7th Amendment Act Manipur was elevated to the status of a Union Territory. Provision was also made for a Territorial Council of 30 elected members headed by a Chairman who enjoyed executive authority over
those subjects vested upon the Council. Such measures failed to pacify the agitated population who wanted nothing short of statehood. The local expectations were not fulfilled and could not be so till a responsible government was set up. To make the situation worse, Nagaland which was relatively a less populated state was given statehood in 1963. Such measures deeply hurt the sentiments of the people who had toiled hard for the very same status.

To ease the tense situation prevailing in the state the Union Territories Act, 1963 provided a Legislative Assembly of 30 elected members a Council of 3 Ministers. Yet, in practice, nothing changed much for the state was still administered through the Chief Commissioner in spite of the presence of the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers. Moreover, the Territorial status deprived the M.L.As of Manipur to take part in the election of the President who was directly responsible for the administration of the territory.

The constant politics of dilly dallying snapped the patience of the people and there arose a mass movement to press for the demand of statehood. Then in the neighbouring

64. M. Horam, n.3, p.152.
65. ibid., p.153.
States of Nagaland and Mizoram, insurgency had taken roots, thus encouraging the extreme elements to take up militant means. As a result, the years from 1968 to 1970 proved to be the years of frequent 'hartals' relay-hunger strikes, arrests, lathi-charges and firings.66 Finally on 21 January, 1972 Manipur was elevated to the status of full-statehood, conceding to one of the major demands of the people. However, the prolonged delay in fulfilment of their demands had alienated certain sections of the society who could not, but doubt the sincerity of the Centre towards the overall development of Manipur.

Economic backwardness was one of the important factor in pushing the state towards insurgency and turmoil. Economy affects the very life of an individual and stagnation in economy leads to unemployment. The main economic activity in Manipur is agriculture followed by weaving, fishing and other cottage industries. Where industry is concerned Manipur is still lagging behind. The financial assistance extended to Manipur so far may be characterised as confining to the sphere of routine expenditures like pays and allowances and similar expenditure which cannot be considered long term investments for future economic devel-

66. ibid.
The jump in population has not been at par with employment avenues. The population is 18,26,714 according to 1991 Census. Not only has population increased but literacy has also made significant progress. Literacy is 60.90 per cent and when the state machinery is unable to absorb the unemployed youths, the natural fall out is a growing sense of discontentment and resentment against the established system.

Manipur has been called India's Bosnia. It may though be putting the problem too strongly, but it does however highlight the problems facing the state. The escalation of problems has been significant. It mostly has its origins in the numbers of local discontentment and grievances which was left unattended and assumed dangerous proposition in the context of India's national security today. This is particularly so, because the ultimate goal of any insurgency group is secession from the Indian Union.

Manipur's problems are enormous more so because of the discontent and ethnic rivalry prevalent in the hill areas. Manipur is a ticking time bomb with as many as 18 insurgent groups operating in the state - such as NSCN, PLA, UNLF, People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, Kangleipak

Communist Party, Revolutionary Joint Committee, North Eastern Council Army, Manipur Liberation Tiger Army, Kathoklaba Meiteis Athouba, Ereipak Kanba Lup, RPF (K), United Islamic Revolutionary Army, Kuki National Front, HPF, Kuki National Army, Komrem People's Council, Chin-Kuki Resistance Force and Kuki National Organisation. The existence of numerous insurgency outfits is a serious indication of the turmoil prevailing in the state with law and order in chaos.

The insurgency in Manipur dates back to 1948, when the Manipuri communists under the charismatic leadership of Hijam Irabot, took up the cause of liberating Manipur from the suffering in a state of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism by resorting to the Maoist line of armed struggle against the power that be. 68 Hijam Irabot pursued populist ideas which included the installation of a popular responsible government, panchayati Raj, revision of the land tenure system, cessation of forced labour and removal of taxation. 69 He was closely associated with the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) and identified closely with the secessionist movements of the Shans, Karens and Kachins.

The insurgency movements were subsequently revitalised

69. ibid.
by guerilla outfits, of which the name of PLA, PREPAK and KCP are outstanding. The outfits approach the national liberation movement for Manipur from different platforms and perspectives. However, the primary objective has been to rid Manipur of the rule of the Indian occupation.

**Social Base**

The present situation in Manipur has plunged the state into an abyss of darkness. The administration having failed to contain the insurgency in the valley and hill areas and also the failure to contain the feud between the Nagas and the Kukis which has left over 500 dead and thousands homeless. The Naga-Kuki feud is analysed in the last chapter.

Caught in this endless web and vicious cycle is the common man whose support is the lifeline for the success of the extremists and their goal. In any given situation, life becomes extremely hard for the people who are caught between the guns of the insurgents on the one hand and the law enforcements on the other. Moreover, it is not wrong to assume that every household has a member in or directly or indirectly connected to the various underground outfits. Loyalty to them is much stronger. North-east abounds with

reports of army excess and abuse of human rights and Manipur is no exception.

The people also live in constant fear of guns. Extremists run a kind of parallel government and collection of taxes is rampant, whether voluntarily or through sheer compulsion. No government servant including police or contractors escape from payment of taxes to the underground outfits. It is noteworthy that most of the extremists are young and able bodied. It is the lack of employment avenues and the 'high cost' of securing a job which compells them to the life of an insurgent. This inevitably leads to a sluggish economic development, political stagnation, disruption of social growth which irreversibly affects the youths and their future.

TRIPURA

Introduction

Tripura is situated between 22 56' and 24 32' north latitude and between 91 10' and 92 22' east longitude. It is practically surrounded by Bangladesh except in the east Mizoram and Karimganj district of Assam. It has an international boundary of 850 kilometres and is connected with the rest of India by only 201 kilometres access road through the hills to the border of Karimganj district of Assam. Dharma-
nagar, a small town in the north is linked by railway line through the same district. Tripura, according to the 1991 Census, has a population of 2,744,827 (1991).

Prior to the British rule, Tripura, then Tipperah, was a princely state. In 1765, when the East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, Tipperah virtually came under the British rule. In 1808, the British government recognised for the first time Durga Manikya as Raja and since this date, every successive Raja has received investiture from British government and has been bound to pay tribute on his accession. In 1371, an English officer was first appointed at Hill Tipperah as Political Agent in order to protect British interest and advice the Raja. In 1878, this post was abolished and in its place the District Magistrate of Tipperah in Bengal was nominated as the Ex-Officio Political Agent of the British Government in Tipperah. Subsequently, a common Political Agent for all the Eastern States including Tipperah was appointed by the British Government under the designation 'Agents to the Governor General of India' at Calcutta. During the British rule, the Rajas of Tipperah successively governed the state as semi-independent

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The state of Tripura attained statehood on 21 January 1972 under the north-eastern Regions Reorganization Act, 1971. The historical process of Tripura has had its share of problems which are vast and varied and the partition of the country has had serious impact on the demographic balance in the state.

Tripura is a unique state and like elsewhere in the north-east, it has been plagued by militancy which has hampered the overall growth and development of the state. The problems in Tripura are to some extent similar to the problems in Assam as the genesis of the problem was the influx of immigrants from across the border.

Rise of Militancy in Tripura

The problem in Tripura has been between the indigenous tribals and the Bengalis. The population composition is of unique character. Population of Tripura comprises of a number of tribes numbering more than eighteen groups and sub-groups. Most of these groups, share ethnical characteristics, and possessed similar cultural and social traits.

Throughout the State there are 37 scheduled tribes and they are located mostly in the rural areas and earn their

72. ibid., p.23.
livelihood by cultivation. The scheduled tribes in Tripura are composed of Tripuris, Reangs, Noatias, Hallam Chakma, Jamatia, Mog, Mizo and Kuki. Other non-indigenous tribes are the Garos, Mundas, Khasis, Santhals and Bhutias. Numerically, the Tripuris are the largest tribe belonging to the Bodo group of Indo-Mongoloid origin. However, the tribals constitute only 30 per cent of the total population as compared to 70 per cent of the Bengali population. The uniqueness of the situation here, however, lies in the fact that unlike in other contiguous hill areas in the northeast, the tribal people of Tripura have come to be submerged in the growing mass of non-tribals leading acculturation in a manner and scale which has but few parallels in the country. The influx of foreigners into Tripura has been mainly from Sylhet, Comilla Naskhali and Chittagong districts of Bangladesh (former East Pakistan). The tribal population was submerged by the foreign influx which had serious impact on land ownership.

The majority of the tribals inhabit the hilly infertile areas whereas the Bengalis inhabit the plain areas. The tribals felt cheated of their lands which had passed into

73. ibid., p.43.
74. ibid., p.130.
the hands of the Bengalis. Deep at the heart of the tension in Tripura lies the question of land, whose importance the hill tribes have come to realise now that many among them have given up jhuma and taken to permanent cultivation. Moreover, most of tribals had sold off their land to the non-tribals. From 1960 onwards thousands of plots of tribal land were transferred to non-tribals against cash in most of these cases the Collector's permission was not taken which made the transaction illegal. This was resented by the tribals when they realised that they had been duped by the non-tribals. This further antagonised relations between the tribals and non-tribals.

Moreover, the influx of Bengalis proved to be a threat to the indigenous people not only where land was concerned but most importantly in the field of employment avenues. Typically, settlers from the plains tend to grab the land from the tribals and hog all the lucrative and private sector jobs. The primary reason for the immigrants gaining ground in various employment avenues was the relative advancement in the field of education. The tribals were comparatively backward in education in order to compete for better jobs and facilities. The losing out of jobs was

75. V.K. Sarin, n.61, p.131.

resented by the tribals for they felt cheated in their own land.

The general economic backwardness of the state is also instrumental in the rise of insurgent groups who fight against the system which has been unable to provide them any kind of relief. Besides poor communications, inadequate transport facilities, absence of large or even medium industries and due to lack of interest by the Centre in the affairs of the area have further compounded due problems of Tripura. The state is also not self-sufficient depending heavily on New Delhi for foodgrains and other basic requirements.

Demands of the Extremists

The Tripura Upjati Samiti (TUJS) was the most vocal in their demand for a better deal for the tribals under the leadership of Bijoy Hrangkhawl. The TUJS was formed on 16 January 1967 to protect the interests of the tribals. This was thought necessary in view of the lackadaisical attitude of the CPI(M) and Congress Party towards the interests of the tribals. The tribals began to identify themselves with the new party and there was an exodus of many tribal youths

77. V.K. Sarin, n.61, p.137.
from both the older parties. Bijoy Hrangkhawl pursued a strong line of policy encouraged with his rising popularity and supported by the Tribal Students Federation and Tripura Sena.  

Bijoy Hrangkhawl formed the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) to pursue its objective of upliftment of the tribals through armed struggle. The Tripura National Volunteers was later changed to Tribal National Volunteers (TNV). The TNV leader in a special issue of the 'Free Tripura Bulletin' published by the 'Provisional Government of published by the 'Provisional Government of TNV', on 10 May, 1987 stated that 'the noble ideology of TNV is to form a socialist form of government'. He also rejected the Indian court system and gave a call to the people to strive their traditional chieftainship system and to seek help 'from the community courts'.

The other insurgency groups in Tripura are National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF). The insurgent outfits have the ability of giving high sounding military and civilian ranks to their leaders and others. Psychologically speaking, yen for rank and indiscriminate use of fire power appear to be an attrac-

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78. The Tribal Students Federation was the student front of TUJS and the Tripura Sena was the armed wing of the party.

tion for the tribal youths to join insurgent groups as most of the extremists are either in their teens or within twenty-five year age groups.  

Tripura is in turmoil today. Development activities have virtually come to an end and most of the educational institutions have suffered due to the unrest. There are constantly cases of extortion, kidnapping, arson etc. The reality of the situation is that as long as insurgency continues to dominate life in the state, the tribals will continue to be the worst sufferers.

The volatile situation in the northeast has grown in intensity and stature when we look at the encompassing nature of insurgency. Out of a total of seven states, four states have become hard hit by insurgency. Today, with the exception of Mizoram, which gave up insurgency, stirrings of militancy have become more pronounced even in the erstwhile peaceful states of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. The anti-foreigners stir in Meghalaya and the Chakma issue in Arunachal Pradesh has the potential to breakout into full-fledged insurgency movements if matters are left to linger on.

The growth of insurgency has clearly indicated that it

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80. ibid.
is the culmination of several factors: social, political and economic grievances over a long period which has given rise to armed rebellion. Wrong assessment and indifferent attitude of the government to localised problems has been crucial in the spurt of violent activities in the northeast. Moreover, historical and political developments which worked against the tribals preferred interests encouraged the early radicals to take up extreme measures. The movements espoused by the leaders soon caught the imagination of the people at large, and gradually received the grassroot support so vital to their movement.

Insurgency, thus, does not rise overnight. The roots are traced back into history and it is a clear indication of the many facets of insurgency, its multiple causes and long term development process.