



Engelei

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# PART 1

## Rendezvous pologround Kangjeibung thoknaba



Author in October 2020 during the Pandemic.

“I see friends shaking hands, saying ‘How do you do?’, and I think to myself what a wonderful world,” crooned Louis Armstrong in 1968, two years after I came to London. Today, the world has suddenly become more beautiful for me because of my vulnerable age to the Covid-19 virus, with which I may be pushing up daisies any day.

When I set out on this journey to write about my experiences in pristine Imphal as a little and big boy, ending with the extraordinary story of political intrigue and forced integration of Manipur to India in 1949, I was wondering whether I would survive the first phase of the Covid pandemic.

As I am 85 years old and endowed with my age-related memory decline, my efforts in tracking down the names of some of those people who were involved in the events I am writing about, are becoming a challenge.

I am glad that my repressed memories are coming back with some trepidation. I can piece them together and put them into some sort of order so that I can share them with the coming generations. They are factual records of actual events and real people. Because I was there.

Before I home in on the topic, I would take this opportunity to tell you young people, with enormous thanks to my deceased parents who lived till their early 90s that, old age is wonderful. It's great fun. I was young once, and so, I know the difference. Old age is a repository for arcane knowledge.

In the grand philosophical overview of aging, Helen Small, an Oxford don, wrote in her book, "The Long Life" (2007) that our lives accrue meaning over time, and therefore the story of the self is not complete until it experiences old age – the stage of life that helps us grasp who we are and what our life has meant.

In the West, where people are now living longer, old age is now considered to be at the age of 70-71 for men and 73 for women. In the 1960s, it used to be 65 for men and 60 for women, which were the official retirement age. On average globally, women survive their husbands by at least 3 years. Average 5 years.

Most people dread getting old. This is true. We must remember there are many plus sides to getting old, such as you don't have to be right all the time. You no longer sweat the small stuff. Your emotions bounce around much less.

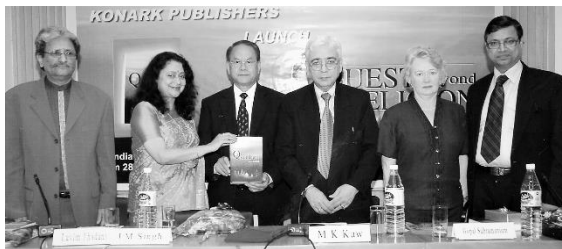
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You don't have to keep up with the Joneses anymore. Life improves in many ways with old age. Old age connotes respect. No more nuisance from the common cold. Our immune system remembers the old enemy virus of common cold. For some, you can follow your hobby in full as I am doing now. I am writing a kind of my memoir. Not particularly all personal.

I had written five books and had them published. The last book was the Manipuri translation from English of *The Origin of Meiteis & Meitei Lon is not a Tibeto-Burman language*. I have written over 700 articles in 10 years.



Launch of my 5<sup>th</sup> book *Meiteigi hourakphalm amadi Meitei lon asi tibetoburman lon nate*, at the Classic Imphal Hotel, Imphal in 2018.



My 2<sup>nd</sup> Book release, *Quest Beyond Religion*. India International, Delhi, 2005.

In my grand old age, I am luckier than many as I have a younger wife. We are hidebound by marriage. A Manipuri man with an English woman. My wife does everything for me. From housekeeping to cashiering and from chauffeuring to banking.

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All that glitters is not gold. There are problems of old age. Mostly with infirmities. And I do have one now. The Covid virus mostly kills people with a limited number of years ahead of them. And octogenarians like me, are likely to kick the bucket in only a few days after its invasion as it crunches the lungs to bits.

The WHO declared an outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic on March 11 2020, with so many old and middle-aged people dropping dead like flies. It has struck fear into the hearts of everybody. No one enjoys the fear of a quick death.

For many, fear drives faith, which gives them a glimmer of hope. But I am not one of them. The virus has drastically, turned the world upside down for everybody, including children. It has taken away social liberties with its potentially high death toll from crowding.

Still, it is good to know that the darkest hour of the night is just before dawn. As the anxiety strafed my heart, a new will surged into my conscious. The intention to survive. The evolutionary survival of the fittest.

It was because of the news that a new dawn was breaking like a crepuscular ray in the murky Covid-laden sky. It was the news about the marketing of an immune-vaccine against this Covid-19 virus. It brought hope and confidence. Old age was not an excuse for giving up.

Based on the forensic value, the Covid-19 virus, now known as SARS-CoV-has brought trepidation and frustration globally. A good many people's dreams have all but shattered into a morass of platitude.

During this pandemic, like most people, my wife and I remained isolated with no visitors. That included our children and grandchildren. We have been wedged for months with the trapped air, sagging with human mental fatigue and despair. While most people sought solace glued to

television with cans of beer, my wife and I have been on the wagon, despite being wrapped in monotony. We are not in the habit of seeking anodyne in the bottle.

During the past three months I have been bored out of my mind. My normal pastime of writing has been suspended as my mind began 'to wander lonely as a cloud that floats on high over vales and hills'. With the arrival of the summer months, I was trying to have a hold on my dormancy by doing some yard work in my fecund garden. This summer was screaming hot for many years.

At this time of the year, as September is ending with the temperature dropping with chilly and dank air, I have become very imperturbable like the sparrows, which in autumn, will stop gathering and twittering on the roof top. Instead, they will start picking their potential partners and cosily settle their winter in nesting spots.

In the way age regresses in some old people (behaving like small children), I am also like a child, stymied with only one thought. The apprehension that as my age is at the tipping point and there are restrictions to world travel, I might not have a chance to see my hometown of Imphal again. The thought often leaves my gut pulled into a tight skein of despondency.

I am not giving up. I remain positive while waiting for the D-day. Luckily, because of my old age, time 'speeds up'. My days pass quickly to nights, weeks to months. And before I know, the old year will ring out and the New Year will ring in.

One of the upticks of being old is that time appears to go much faster, and the days seem shorter. It is because the measurable 'clock time' is not the same as the time perceived by the human mind. And the rate at which changes in mental images are perceived, decreases with age.

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While scientists are searching for a vaccine and an antidote to the virus at breakneck speed, and people like me in the UK, are snapping and cracking the bonds of our society by distancing from each other, a WhatsApp message arrived out of the blue.

It was from Moirangthem Shantikumar from Uripok, asking me to write my memoir with all the events and experiences of my childhood just before and after the Japanlan.

Shanti, who died since, was a retired IGP of Manipur Police Force. I have known him from his birth as his father Moirangthem Gojendra Singh was my best friend. Shanti like me, had an avid interest in writing articles. He loved reading books.

Shanti suggested that a memoir of my youth would be of immense interest to the people of his generation and generations after him, as there are hardly any written accounts of those exotic days.



Shantikumar Singh.



RK Dilip Singh.

He was joined in his effort to twist my arm, by his friend, RK Dilip, a retired Director of CCDU in Manipur. Frankly, I was not very keen to write a memoir of my life and careeindexing my foibles and achievements. It would be disservice to the readers. Received wisdom holds it that I have no pearls of wisdom to print and there is nothing to pass on to benefit the future generations.

However, their cajolery and my altruism eventually prevailed. Fortune favours the bold. With equal parts of determination and foreboding, I consented to put on record some historical events as I observed them.

While writing these accounts from memory, every effort is made to put them in the correct perspective and right chronological order. I am also taking this opportunity to share a bit of my salad days when I was green in judgement. I regret the inevitable banality.

As my memory is stretched 80 years back, like an old elastic band, and for the sake of expediency, I need to find a convenient starting grid, from which I can go back in time or move forward. And for this, I have chosen the date of my first arrival in London from Imphal.

I arrived in London on a damp and foggy morning of February 10 1966. I came here to do my post-graduate studies in medicine and then return home to open a nursing home in Imphal. In fond anticipation, my father and the eldest brother Gokulchandra began to construct a building for this explicit purpose, at Sadar Bazaar (Makha Dukan) in Imphal.

But things did not work out as planned. Strangely enough, after all the girlfriends I had in India, during the first three months of my arrival in the UK, I met a girl, Margaret, who is now my wife. It was a sort of the proverbial 'love at first sight'. An intense desire to be with her. I did not really know what love is.

Once I got my professional post-graduate degrees for which I came here in the first place, and married Margaret in 1970, she desired that we settled here. I had a hard decision to make. I took her to my home in Imphal in 1972 for her to have a look around. She was not keen.

In the end, I decided to settle here as the thought of leaving her was unthinkable. I was also determined to find out whether I was egging on fate or whether fate was dogging me. It was gracious of my parents that

they did not say anything about it. They left it all to me.

I came straight to London from Churachandpur where I was posted for just over a year, beginning in 1965. Previously, I worked as a physician at the Civil Hospital in Imphal. There was nothing much to do at Churachandpur. Most patients did not have time to be ill.

There were no social participations or interpersonal interactions for me. There was naught to engage my mental or physical energy. My social take-off for which I chose to become a doctor, was beginning to look like a cold start.

It had dawned on me then, that the only way to fulfil my life's ambition and to remain unruffled in high Imphal society, was to get a post-graduate degree in medicine. But I was not making any effort towards that goal.

I was in a state of 'suspended animation'. There were a few reasons which I kept to myself. Like the mills of God, it was grinding slowly. I could not make my mind up. I was in the doldrums.

Life at Churachandpur on the other hand, was one of the best times of my life. Being my own boss at the Hospital. I also had a great pleasure in revamping the hospital which had only one unisex ward of 30 beds.

It was dreary and dilapidated. There was not even a small room to run an outpatient clinic. Doctors, who had been posted there before my time, had just bided their time until the next order came for another transfer elsewhere.

I decided to do something to improve the hospital and provide a better health care. To begin with, I smartened the nurses and their uniforms. As they were trained at Mission hospitals in Assam, they were very good and efficient. They were all local people, such as Kukis, Paites and



Hmars. A good pharmacist was posted to the hoispital.

It is great that I can still remember the names of two Staff nurses, Chingnu and Mannu among others. Chingnu often acted as an anaesthetist when I did some minor, and major operations such as Caesarean section.



With Nurses at Churachandpur District Hospital.  
On my right, Staff Nurse Chingnu and Left, Staff Nurse Mannu.

While trying to give a face-lift to the hospital, I was fortunate in that I had a lot of connections at government offices in Imphal. That made my task to improve the hospital much easier. I had a separate outpatients' room constructed and various utility facilities renovated. I got the ward redecorated and electric lighting installed. I had the open ground of the hospital fenced off.

The Director of Medical department in Imphal at that time, was Mr Malhotra. He treated me with respect as he knew I was influential. I could get hold of many things that were essential for the hospital.

I had a new X-ray machine installed and organised for the posting of an X-ray technician. I had also liaised with the health minister of the Manipur Government, for a new purpose-built hospital. I managed to

get the foundation stone of a new hospital laid, one month before I left for London.

While in Churachandpur, I became quite friendly with Lt Col Jagdish, the Commanding Officer of the - "7 Guards' Battalion". His battalion of Biharis was deployed at Churachandpur for counter-insurgency measures. Every evening, I was invited to the Officers' Mess - for drinks and a meal thereafter.

I soon settled down to the rhythm of drinking free officer-quality dark rum before dinner most nights. With a lot of drinks, I often ate very little. As a result, I lost quite a bit of weight by the time I left Churachandpur for London. Partying was easy as I had a jeep or a Vespa scooter for transport. Often, he would send a military jeep to pick me up.

It was great that I was able to revisit Churachandpur after about 20 years. Shanti took me there with his vast police escort when the Insurgency was still active. I found the landscape of the town completely unrecognisable.

The hospital that I arranged to be built, was discarded and a bigger one was constructed. I was told that Chingnu retired as a matron from this hospital. Shanti and I had the pleasure of visiting her and her husband at their sumptuous house in Pearson Village at Churachandpur.

Talking of emaciation. I must get it out of my chest while I am on this topic. In England, with a better and rich diet prepared by my wife, and the traditional British beer, I began to put on weight gradually.

As I grew older, I developed a beer belly, very unusual for a Meitei of my era. The British way of lifestyle seemed to have transmuted my ancestral gene of a lean physique to an abdominous one. It has not escaped my understanding that 'the bigger the belly the faster you go to see your maker'. A lot of food for thought.

All is not lost. I had a breather. During this lockdown as food and alcohol were rationed, my wife and I stopped drinking alcohol completely. We were on half the portion of our usual meals and desserts. I was thus able to bring my weight down to the right average weight and BMI (Body Mass Index) for my height and age.

My paunch completely disappeared. What a beauty! A thing of right weight is a joy for the remainder of my life. Thanks to the upside of Covid virus. I can now wear all my old suits. My wife nearly donated them to charity. They have survived.

So have I from the deadly virus. I am now able to travel back in time, to Imphal town of my childhood and retrieve some of my long-forgotten memories.

After my settlement in England, I used to visit Imphal almost every year with my wife Margaret, and sometimes with my son and daughter. For the past few years, my wife, son Neil and I have been visiting Imphal in the month of November, to coincide with the international polo tournament, which we have enjoyed watching.



At the 11th International Polo Tournament in Imphal at the Outer Polo Ground. L-R: Author as Guest of Honour, 3rd H Deleep Singh (President). Standing proudly, Col M Ranjit Singh (vice –President).

It seems that history has quite a bit of life left after all. Things end but memories last forever. "Tis in my memory lock'd, and you yourself shall keep the key of it." said Shakespeare. I am glad that I have the key to open some of my locked memories.

Talking of which. I would now like to cut the first turf and lead off semantically to prepare my topic, with the most unforgettable personal memory of my youth. It is the unpleasant and frequent street brawls I had as a schoolboy, with a tendency to scrap anywhere, anytime.

We know many Meiteis tended to punch up at times. And that was as normal for Meiteis as if they were going to the flicks. In my case, it was the intensity and the frequency that still puzzle me.

I crave to indulge in this subject for a bit in the very beginning of this memoir, as a form of an anthropological study about the core of Meitei national character, putting myself as a stereotype. By national character, I am referring to shared beliefs and values, and personality structures, common to the Meitei nation.

My hypothesis, through genetically based, and reinforced by the existing psychological theories and knowledge, is only an educated guess. There is no confirmation. It is capitalised on the premise that the indomitable Meitei national character of narcissism and prowess, is the result of long-standing fights for survival (Darwinian Theory).

I have discussed about this Meitei attitude in my book, *The origin of Meiteis & Meitelon is not a Tibeto-Burman language*. That was inclusive of negative results which were informative.

Briefly, Meiteis possessed an immense and abnormal fund of self-esteem. They also harboured the belief that no living person could be better than them. *Eina mahele*. I am the greatest, Muhammad Ali style.

My hypothesis statement initially, forms the basis of a psychological study. It is presumptive that Meitei had a superiority complex because of an overcompensated reaction, as a result of their endeavours to make themselves superior to people of the surrounding communities and countries. It was their belief that their abilities were somehow dramatically better than other peoples.

Meiteis lived in a small community, right in the middle of a valley, surrounded by hill ranges that were inhabited by various tribes, such as the Nagas, the Kukis and the Lushais. Beyond the mountains, there were other communities, such as the Awas, the Takhels and the Ahoms.

As they were hostile to them from time to time, they had to remain physically fit, and to have good morals to defend themselves for survival. At other times, they had to wage war against them to access scarce resources.

As of necessity, they had to build a military force on the Swiss style. Switzerland has a mandatory military service in the Swiss Army for all male citizens when they reach the age of majority. They are issued with assault rifles or pistols, which they keep at home.

Meiteis had to keep themselves fit to fight/fighting fit, Spartan-like, by engaging themselves in various sports and games, including Sagol kangjei (polo). They also needed a psychological make-up to boost their moral with the belief that they were unrivalled by any of these ethnic peoples. That helped them to win battles and wars.

Over the centuries, this acquired mental frame became a trait for Meitei men, which eventually, transmogrified their descendants with a superiority complex. There is ample evidence that Meiteis owed their freedom to this mindset for generations, until the 'Seven Years' Devastation', which was not helped by the intrigue and internecine fighting among the Meitei princes.

After the Anglo-Manipuri war and the inevitable British subjugation, the trait became redundant and so, this pertinent gene began to be submissive. But it took time. The modern generation has almost lost this trait, while I was caught in between these epochs.

During the intervening years between the British conquest and WWII, we still, hung on to this national trait. Not a lot. During the 70 years of my life, this character turned out to be a very big nuisance for me personally.

I thank my lucky stars that I did not end up behind bars. They were three or four near misses from being locked up. Any one of them could have tipped me right over the edge.

Even after I became a doctor and was training at Irwin Hospital in Delhi, I burst into such a supercilious foolhardiness. It was the insulting behaviour of a young nurse, which miffed me overmuch. I had to avenge. I escaped by the skin of my teeth.

Only good fortune and a reasonably high IQ saved me from ruining my entire life. Even at that age of my schooling, I knew it was cause-oriented and thus kept my focus on study and career. I must thank my mother for this. She kept pummelling me about my higher education, often stressing that she would sell her jewellery for it. Not that it was necessary. It was a figure of speech.

It took me years to realise how incredibly influential a surfeit of this centuries-old egoistic and narcissistic Meitei national character was on my behaviour, particularly in the years just after WWII or the Japanlan in Manipuri. I was not alone. But there were not so many like me.

To recap. Meiteis in general and I are narcissists at heart. A narcissist is one who has an inflated sense of his or her own importance. Feeling like, *mana eingondagi kari henna khangdana?* What does he know that I

don't know?

Our nature of self-importance would not allow us to lose an argument with anybody. And having lost in a verbal argument, we would try to win it with a physical fight or thought of such a fight, saying like, *mamaida kinna kok hek shujilaga loire* – the problem will be solved with a punch on his face. We usually try to turn a conventional argument on its head by a fracas.

It was many years later, that I began to figure out that my comportment was only a part of certain informal regularities of behaviour which characterised the Meitei nation. It was not individualistic. It was not that I was brave. I was not a coward either. I was not a hero, and I was not a fink. It was an ineluctable genetic trait, like a dog with a bone.

I fought everywhere. This defiant character followed me all my life, even in the UK. It put my entire well-being and career in jeopardy at different times of my life. It was like a rat terrier. It would not let me go.

While I was at St Joseph's in Darjeeling, the School Rector, a Canadian Father (Catholic priest), a no-nonsense guy, sent me home for two weeks for fighting a Punjabi class fellow, whose name was *Grover*.

I used to call him *Gober* very innocently (In public schools, surnames are used). He took umbrage with this. One day we had a fight in the Dining room. As a matter of fact, it was he who he initiated it. But I was the fall guy because of my ill reputation.

I was not aware that *Gober* means cow dung in Hindi. I did not know Hindi very well at the time. I knew only few words, good enough to converse with coolies at Railway stations and waiters at restaurants.

I must admit, I always had a superiority complex as I grew up in an affluent and respected family. That was an acquired trait. My study in

Darjeeling with a high-flying European lifestyle, further accentuated my conceit. I looked down on people in general.

Although I was born with my father's high IQ, I also inherited my father's other gene that encoded: *Ei meena utsitaba yade*. Meaning, 'I will not be slighted'.

I don't know how he grew up as a teenager. But I do know that he went to Dacca to study civil engineering. In those days, he had to walk *Tongjei Maril* all the way to Cachar and then by boat to Dacca. Indeed, he invariably kept his perspective and dignity intact all the time I knew him.

In school, as I was a student of biology, I assumed I came to this world with this truculent disposition as I developed this defiant attitude very early in my boyhood, when I was 13 or 14 years old. It all began when a few boys tried to intimidate me early in my middle school. I then decided to be as tough as woodpecker's lips. And I did, but not tough enough to take destiny by the throat.

I also had an unpleasant and enduring memory of being bullied in primary school (see later). My scuffles were so frequent that only a certain degree of upbringing and intelligence saved my bacon. I was among the top two in my class in school. I always passed my examinations in First division.

It was only in the medical college that I came across this concept of superiority and inferiority complex in human behaviour. That people with inferiority complex often over assert themselves as superior. That, however, was not part of my character, I thought. It was years later in my postgraduate studies in the UK, that I read about the famous German medical psychologist Alfred Adler, who propounded this theory in early 20th century.

Alfred Adler theorised that an individual's unconscious self ideally works



to convert feeling of inferiority to superiority and in that they often become aggressive. People with inferiority complex, often develop superiority complex as physical compensation. The two complexes are often tied together. I began to think. I believed him.

It was a stary night when I bumped into the ex-Principal of St Anthony's College in Shillong. I met him in Imphal ten years after I beat up a professor at nearby St Edmund's College in Shillong, where I was student. Now, he was a patient, and I was his doctor.

I beat up this professor as he impugned my character and thus deprived me of my hostel accommodation. I escaped imprisonment by a hair's breadth.

I remembered this kind European Catholic priest who talked sense to me at that time of my need. He did not know me at this time, that I was the one who had beaten the professor. I did not tell him either.

This ageing Father was now the Principal of Don Bosco's School at Chingmeirong in Imphal. I recognised him when I went to attend to him as a government doctor. Excitement thrummed the air. I was curious to know what he thought of Meitei students' disreputable tendency for brawling in Shillong in those days.

Th priest said, 'having come out of cloistered Manipur into the wide-open world, they (the boys) inflated themselves that they were not inferior to anybody. When that self-esteem was challenged, it led to violence and aggression.

I felt his assessment might have a grain of truth in it. But I also wondered if he was just adumbrating the view of Alfred Adler that I knew. I withheld my identity for a later meeting to talk some more. To my disappointment he was sent away somewhere, out of Manipur. Probably related to his illness.

On reflection, I do agree in some respect that I had an inferiority complex about my spare build with a flat chest. And I suspected those sturdy boys thought of me as a weakling and a wimp. Perhaps, I tried to compensate for it. But that was not all the answer. I never had a complete answer.

Because of my combative attitude during my high school days in Imphal, I earned notoriety. That made me feel quite uncomfortable in my own skin. The fights often, followed when some boys stared at me. I was then obsessed with the negative notion that the guy had a loathing for me. It never entered my head that he might be gawking because I was smart or something.

I was then quite stylish, arraying myself in the smartest outfit. My dress style was more offbeat rather than on a trend, such as wearing American GI outfit of light brown khaki shirt and matching khaki trousers and web belt (reconstituted from left over after war).

Sometimes, I dressed up in corduroy trousers and corduroy bomber jacket, which nobody had. I often wore a felt hat (American movie style), or woollen flat cap (Dev Anand style in the film Bazi). Many boys probably hated me as silver spoon was written all over me.

It was never in my consciousness that they could also be staring at me because I was staring at them. Anyhow, such eye confrontations always captured my imagination that it was a challenge – ‘how dare you’? It hardly mattered whether they were real or perceived.

Such a glaring with a particular person would remain embedded in my memory. It would repeat whenever we would chance meet again. Eventually, I would ask him (never the other person) why he had been staring at me? I thought that was what the alpha man did.

That would always accrue into a fight then and there, and with follow-

ups. And if the environment was not suitable for such a skirmish, we would make a date and time for *Kangjeibung thoknaba* – an appointment to have a fight at Mapal Kangjeibung (Outer Polo ground). I will come to this later.

I was also prone to such punch-ups entirely from another angle. It was a sporting events. I used to cycle as fast as I could in the Town centre. I had a boys' bicycle, a green Raleigh with all the mod cons. It was known as 'bice' ie 22 inches tall, in Hindi. The adult ones were called 'choubish ie 24 inches tall.

As I habitually cycled at such fast speeds, I was often involved in a collision with another cyclist, when both of us misjudged the direction, we were taking. Often it ended with a fight when the other person would gaffe, saying aggressively like, *gari thoubada Namit udra?* Are you a blind cyclist? Then, I would give him an apt reply: *Ei mit na una una, thaoina touribani*. I can see alright, but I am doing it on purpose.

This bit is remnant of mediaeval history. Most fistfights I had, were random 'street fights' on the spot. Or they were challenge fights that took place, at dusk at an agreed rendezvous place at *Mapal Kangjeibung* (Outer Polo ground). The later was known in local parlance as *kangjeibung thoknaba*, since time before I was born. This was a tradition.

This rendezvous place was in an area at the southern end of *mapal kangjeibung*, far from the madding crowd of Khwairamband Bazaar and from the glare of streetlamps. It was by the northern boundary of *Boro Shahib's* (Political Agent's) garden.

The idea was to allow us to fight out until we had enough. It was meant to be a fair fistfight with no weapons. Each fighter would bring a few friends with him to oversee fair play. After such a fight traditionally, there was no more animus between the two belligerents.

There was a narrow and raised footpath between the Political Agent's Garden and the polo ground, which linked *makha dukan* (Sadar Bazaar) with the main Indo-Burma Road (now Asian Highway) as a shortcut.

It connected the main road by the side of a lone building of British Treasury, which was guarded day and night by one Gurkha sentry from the 4th Assam Rifles. We could arrive at the rendezvous by the footpath or traipse across the polo ground from the main Kangla to Kangchup road.

This shortcut walkway was separated from the garden of the Political Agent by tall chicken wire fencing. Inside the garden, we could see a medium-sized lake with a central island and vegetation. There were wild ducks and pleasure boating facilities on it.

Legend had it that Thangal General had a bone to pick with the ill-fated Mr Grimwood, the Political Agent at that time, who was the first of the five British officers, to be hacked to death by irate Manipuris, just before the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891.

Lt Walter Simpson of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Gurkha Rifles was the second to be assassinated immediately. The other three who also lost their lives were the bungling James Quinton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, Lt Col Charles Skene, Commandant of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Gurkha Rifles and Mr W Cossins, Assistant secretary to the Chief Commissioner.

Apparently, Grimwood was often seen having a boat ride in the lake in the Political Agent's estate, with Thangal's 20-year-old pretty daughter, who could speak a couple languages. This usually happened while Mrs Ethel Grimwood was away on holiday in Shillong. It was quite often.

Rumours soon circulated widely that that Ethel had an affair with her half-brother, Capt Boisragon, who was posted in Shillong at that time. There was also speculation among the British officers that, Thangal

hated Grimwood for keeping his daughter as mistress and sharing her with Lt Walter Simpson (cf. Manipuri Mischief, 2018, pp 205, 209, 248).

Simson, who was posted at Langthabal with the 43 Gurkha Rifles, used to come to Imphal to play polo every Thursday. Ethel Grimwood if she was there, welcomed him and other British officers by laying on 'at home' informal receptions.

As it happened, both JW Grimwood and Walter Simson were the first to be killed in front of the Durbar Hall (Uttara) near the western gate of Kangla in 1891, on the orders of Thangal General.



Ethel Grimwood



Jubraj Tikendrajit

More vibrantly, I have this opportunity to quote here an extract from a 'SECRET' report by Col John Ardagh (National Archives – Ardagh Papers PRO/30/40/12/3) how Prince Tikendrajit had the guts to revolt against his stepbrother.

The extract reads: Jubraj Tikendrajit was quite friendly with Mr and Mrs Grimwood. He would often ride with them and come to the Residency with a group of Royal girls.

"The moral to be drawn from this part of the story is – that if Mrs Grimwood had lived with her husband at Manipur, he would not have desired to console himself with Manipuri girls and this occasion or scandal which resulted in a quarrel between him [Tikendrajit] and the

ruling party viz., the Maharajah and Pucca Sanna:- that if he had not taken Tikendrajit into his friendship, as the companion in his orgies, the latter would never have dared to oust his brother, nor would have relied on Grimwood's support for the revolution."

Well, I have discovered so much that I have never known, including my enigmatic penchant for rolling up sleeves to fight. Of which I have silently tried to divine its implicit genetics. After all, the effort to unearth the answer to my time-hallowed conundrum is not like trying to get radio-signal from the other side of the moon.



Ancient British Residency with Johnstone in front  
before it was destroyed during the Anglo-Manipuri war of  
March 31 1891 – April 27 1891.

