



Engelei

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## Part 6

# Ancient Meiteis in Kangleipak Modern Meiteis in Imphal Town



Swadesh Seva Dal' Scout group 1947. Standing at the back (L-R): 2nd author.

Standing: 4th M Gojendra Scout leader (Father of Shanti, ex-IGP) & Manilal.

Sitting: Surendra & Ch Nodiachand [some of the names I can remember].

I have become a wanderlust. My mind wanders back and forth between conscious thoughts. Mind wandering is ubiquitous to the human experience. My mind is no exception. My mind wanders when I am engaged in writing, which is an attention demanding activity.

This is called 'thought sampling'. It is unlike ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) of childhood where they have trouble in

concentrating and are restless. My wandering thoughts are related but not tied down to the subject of my writing. They are just stray thoughts. Not a prodigious feat of memories. They have in fact, helped me to reactivate and retrieve my old memories.

At times, my mind aimlessly cruises for a while like a school of Japanese Koi carp in a glass tank with no destination. It then settles to task relevant thoughts. I do not daydream anymore, which I used to as a schoolboy and it was quite a pleasurable escapade.

My father had a small cubicle built for me as a study room. It was situated in the left side of the veranda of the two-room bungalow I lived in. It was walled on all sides with chicken wire in wooden frames and a chicken wire door. It was meant to keep away a global assembly of mosquitoes from biting me. It was always quiet. During my study my mind often wandered, inhabiting a different life of fantasy for a while.

They were pleasure pursuits at no cost, but they took quite a lot of time from my study. However, I believe every cloud has a silver lining. And during my present mind wanderings, I have stumbled on Meitei cosmology that is inexorably and cryptically associated with Lai Harauba festival, which is a symbolic creation and evolution of Meiteis with their reference to erotic imagery that I found quite vulgar during my boyhood.

In Meitei anthropology, Meiteis are people who have been living in Manipur since the dawn of time, speaking metaphorically, and up to this date. We know it from Meitei oral history that is just an invocation hymn:

**Awang Koubru Asuppa**

**Leima-Laina Khunda Ahanba**

**Nongthrei Ma-u Lingliba**

**Irak Mapan**

**Thariba**

**O Laingthou.**

A rough translation in English goes like this:

**Koubru, the guardian of the north  
Where women-men first settled**

**Heavenly flowers and tress flourished  
Living beings established  
O! King of gods.**

Scientifically speaking, according to the Big Bang model of cosmology, Time began together with the birth of the Universe in a singularity, approximately 14 billion years ago. Singularity is an infinitely dense point from which time and space began to expand incrementally.



Singularity (photo credit: mitpress. Mit.edu).

It therefore, presages that Meiteis were indigenous In Manipur, with or without other human groups. I avoid using the term ‘indigenous’ to Meiteis as it is synonymous with aborigines or endangered natives of a land.

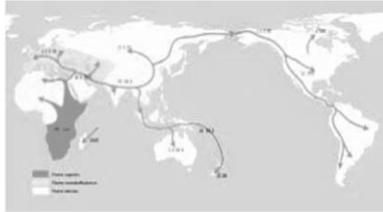
One definition of Indigenous refers to people who lived at a place before colonists or settlers arrived, such as the Negrito tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Maoris of New Zealand. They are also called ‘First Nations’. It is an awkward definition in India with its ambiguous meaning.

The term ‘indigenous’ is poorly defined under international law. I will thus, use it loosely for Meiteis by referring to another definition, which is ‘having a distinct society and culture with collective ancestral ties’ to Kangleipak.

That, our Meitei ancestors were the autochthons or the primordial people, who had been living in Manipur since their arrival after the end of the Last Ice Age, between 20,000-10,000 BCE, has been confirmed by the

finding of stone artefacts in the surrounding hill caves in Ukhrul and Tamenglong as well as in excavations at Napaching in Wangoo village of Imphal valley.

Prehistorically, I suspect the Meitei ancestors came down to the Imphal plain when its water dried up, around the end of New Stone Age period, between 2,000 and 1,500 BCE. That was about the time when the Tibeto-Burman people began to inhabit at the foothills of the Himalayas. They named the valley Kangleipak (Dry land) and their early settlement was at Kangla (dry place). The driest area.



Map of Early humans (*Homo erectus*) passing through Manipur. Photo credit: World history Encyclopaedia.

According to the ‘Out of Africa model’. It was during the final stage of Stone Age (Neolithic Period) that, a part of the group of early human ancestors migrated from Northeast Africa between 100,000-70,000 years ago, and they expanded to India and beyond, through the Manipur corridor. (cf. Author’s Points to Ponder, 2013, pp 29, 80).

Historically, it was Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33-153 CE), who started the Meitei kingdom about the time when Jesus Christ began his very first ministry. Pakhangba had an unshakable sense of historical destiny and amazing cultural creativity.

Pakhangba created an autonomous ‘Brave New World’. Not the dystopian ‘Brave New World’ of Aldous Huxley. He had such ingenuity that, having already absorbed a few small tribes like Khaba, Leihao, Chenglei, Lai and Tin, he forged the remaining powerful seven tribes

(Salai taret) one after the other into a confederation of Meitei nation. This was a couple of thousand years ago.

Pakhangba and his tribe were known as Meitei. Once, he became the big chief, the Ningthou (king) of the confederation of seven salais, he started the hereditary Ningthouja dynasty in Manipur. The big chief, the Ningthou (king) of the confederation of seven salais, he started the hereditary Ningthouja dynasty in Manipur. The confederation became known as 'Meitei'. The whole Kangleipak became known as Meitei Leibak or Meitreibak due to semantic bleaching.



Book Launch: Points to Ponder, Nirmala Hotel, Imphal 2013.  
(From L-R). 2<sup>nd</sup> Amrita, Rupobati, Margaret, Naobi, Suranjan.

Eventually, it was named Manipur in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (1724 CE) after the Meitei conversion into Hinduism in 1717. In the years to come, Meitei kings subdued many tribal villages around Imphal plain, as far as Kohima in the present Nagaland. They extracted tributes from them. Meiteis ruled the roost. It was a sort of Meitei paramountcy.

The independence of Meitreibak also known as the eponymous Kangleipak and later as Manipur in 1724 CE, came to an end after the crushing defeat of 400 brave Meitei soldiers at the Battle of Khongjom by the invading British column from the east.

The British forces occupied Kangla Fort in Imphal on April 27, 1891. Following which, the British Governor General Lord Lansdowne decided

not to annex Manipur to British India. He restored it to a Princely State and kept Manipur under their policy of 'Indirect rule' or Paramountcy.

The Policy of 'Indirect Rule' that was framed for all the Princely States of India was also introduced to Manipur for the Meiteis in the valley, while the tribal peoples in the hills were ruled directly by the Political Agent through the President of Manipur State Durbar (PMSD), under the guise of 'to protect the hill people from the oppression of the kings of Manipur'.

The British rule in Manipur thus began on April 27, 1891, with the promulgation that, "Her Majesty the Queen, Empress of India, has given the Governor General in Council, full authority to choose the Native Ruler and to formulate conditions under which the ruler would be invested with power."

With the enforcement of British suzerainty and paramountcy, Major HP Maxwell, who was the Political Officer during the transition, was appointed the Political Agent. He was answerable to the Chief Commissioner in Assam. The Meitei king was accountable to him in the first place. Suzerainty meant the right to rule over the state of Manipur, while paramountcy meant the British Crown was superior to the Indian states.

Another proclamation on April 27, 1891, affirmed that, "Having declared an end to the sovereign authority of the Regent Kula Chandra Singh of Manipur, the administration of Manipur State was taken over by the General officer commanding Her Majesty's forces in Manipur."

A further notification, dated September 18, 1891, announced that, "The Governor-General in Council has been pleased to select you [5-year-old boy] Churachand, son of Chowbi Yaima, to be the Chief of the Manipur State. You are hereby granted the title of Raja of Manipur, and a salute of eleven guns." (cf. Part 5).

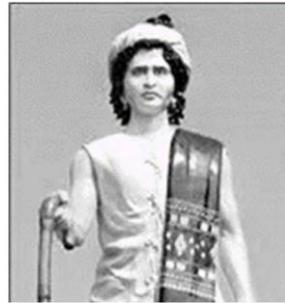
Raja Churachand, when he became an adult, was given the portfolio of education, police, and religio-cultural affairs. His policemen, only a handful, were known as ‘Koyet Anganba’ as they donned red turbans. He was allowed to keep a battalion of armed State Military police (SMP) for internal law keeping. They were armed with outdated muzzleloading rifles.

By the same order, the Hill people remained segregated, and they were thus not involved in the development of a modern state system in Manipur during British Rule. I do not think the division in the administration of the valley and hills was intended as the oft mentioned ‘Divide and Rule’ (Divide et imperia) icon of British military and political strategy. Manipur was too small for the British to worry about.



Kabui Rani Gaidinliu -  
A great Lady.

Sitlhou -  
great man.



Kuki Khotinthang  
A

The Kabui rebellion of 1915 (Rani Gaidinliu) and Kuki rebellion of 1917 were only a slight headache to the British administration. Meiteis who were disarmed, had only a snowflake’s chance in hell for such an uprising.

Before the British occupation, each tribe in the hills had remained independent, usually headed by a chieftain. They had extra-ordinary

skills for survival and conservation. They had set out their own rules for the community. They had their own culture and animistic religion. They had managed their livelihood for millennia from their environment. They had remained off-limits to and protected their biodiversity from outsiders.

The use of the word ‘tribe’ as I am doing now, has been in some bother since the late 1950s. Archaeologists and ethnohistorians have been confronting with each other. It seems to be racially charged and offensive to some communities. But the Indian Government uses it freely as “Schedule Tribes” in its Constitution. And the tribes themselves do not mind it. This is in lieu of the term Indigenous people.

WWII ended in 1945. And India got independence in 1947. As the British left Manipur, the Manipuris became suddenly exposed to the outside world. They called the first Indian Administrator as foreigner not outsider. I know, I was there. Until then, Meiteis were living with hopes tucked in their back pocket, believing that, tomorrow may not be a better day, but there will always be a better tomorrow. Now, they had to find their own feet and think on their feet.

A new Meitei nation was being born. A new order was coming into being and the old order was passing away. It was like a new nation of America was being born during 1790-1828 CE. There was a hive of activities.

Meiteis in Imphal, became focussed on building Imphal, bringing higher education, improving theatrical techniques in dramas, and sports performance, among other things. A few educated people began to indulge in political movements. There was palpable spiritual laxity among the Meitei youth with the beginning of secular thought that was associated with modernity.

Imperceptibly, Meiteis began to think in terms of global modernism that related to the concept of time and space and a set of cultural, political, and economic relationship that affected the nature of their social life.

In the new social structure, we youngsters graduated from eating fish to eating eggs and chicken curry, which was taboo before the Japanlan. Whenever we went to picnics, we ate chicken curry and we could buy chicken curry at the Kabui settlements of Sahib Manai and Major Khun, for one rupee a plateful. Boiled duck eggs were sold at the south end of Sadar bazaar. A dozen cost one rupee.

Meiteis who were politically naïve until about 1945 because of poverty of education, became seriously embroiled in modern politics. Initially, a few of them joined the roaring Indian Congress freedom movement from the British rule, led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. As a young boy, I was also politically conscious. I pasted a poster, a group photo of Gandhi, Nehru, and Subhas on my bedroom wall. The photograph was taken in 1938 when Subhas Chandra Bose became the President of the Indian National Congress.

Meiteis were learning. It is never too late to learn. Forget Plato, who started political thinking or political philosophy in the 4th century BCE. That we keep as knowledge from history. The Meiteis began to get involved in politics accompanied by a new intellectual temper in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Two political parties were in the forefront. One was led by Hijam Irabot, a leftist. The other popular one headed by Lalita Madhab Sharma of the Indian National Congress party. There was also a nascent political activity among the tribals in 1946, steered by Athiko Daiho from Mao -a young party-political man in 1946, for a separate Naga inhabited areas. I knew of him as his younger brother Shibboo Mao studied together in Darjeeling.

There was also a great political consciousness about Independence among the school students in Imphal including me, a young boy. It was instilled by college students from Gauhati and Calcutta during their

summer holidays. They had picked up the impulse for freedom movements from people out there. There were two student organisations.

The first was the Manipur Students' Congress. It was followed by the communist Manipur students' Federation. They organised frequent processions in the town centre. I was too young to know politics, but during the processions, I was also shouting in chorus with the Manipur Students' Congress, like chhatra congress zindabad, "Bharat Mata ki Jay. Long live Students' Congress, Victory to Mother India,

The communist Students Federation was more motivated as the leaders were ideological. They sang songs like:

**Hougatlo changshilo bharat machasa,  
Swadhinnatagi numit thoklakle.  
Himalay chingjaona ngakli awangda,  
Samadrana koiri maikhei ahumda.**

In English: Wake up, March forward, all Indians. The sun of independence has risen. (We are) defended by the Himalayan ranges in the north and surrounded by the sea all around the three sides. They also sang patriotic Manipuri songs like:

**Sati Thoibi yokpi brabhubahan pokpi  
Imani nahakti meitei leima-o,  
Bharata faubi ima nahakni [Manipur].**

In English: You are the distinguished mother [Manipur] in India, the royal Meitei woman, who has brought up Sati Thoibi and given birth to Brabubahan. They were ridiculous self-aggrandisement. Nobody has ever heard of Manipur in India except for a little bit at Cachar in the Silchar district of Assam, where there are a few Manipuri villages.

Talking of Brabubahan. Pundit Atombapu Sharma made serious attempts to make us look more ludicrous in the eyes of Indians. He single-handedly, flummoxed Meiteis to believe that we were the descendants of the Vedic (Iron Age, 10th century BCE) king Brabubahan of Manipur.

Brabubahan was supposed to be the son of a non-existent (even in Meitei mythology) Meitei princess Chitragada. His father was Arjun of the five Pandava brothers. Arjun from the Kuru Kingdom, while roaming the forests of India in his self-exile for breaking the law of polyandry, apparently came to Manipur and met Chitragada. He had a son by Chitragada, called Brabubahan.

I used to believe it myself as a boy. It was confirmed after seeing the Hindi film Chitragada in Imphal in 1948. I knew that the film was based on a fiction novel, Chitra for Chitragada, written by Rabindranath Tagore.

We were also brainwashed by a fabricated story of how the Hindu god Mahadev made three gullies with his Trisul (Trident) through Chingnunghut in the hills of Tengnoupal, to drain the water from Imphal valley. He did it in order that Krishna could play his Ras Leela with his paramour Radha and milkmaids of Brindaban in Manipur. It sticks in the craw. It is far away for Krishna to come all the way from Brindavan with all the dancing girls.

There is no doubt that Manipur (plateau) was raised from the bottom of the sea as part of the Himalayan ranges, like a cup filled with water, millions of years ago when two tectonic plates collided. (cf. Author's Points to Ponder, The Raising of Kangleipak from the bottom of the sea, pp 44-47).

Gradually the water drained away to the lower elevation of Burma through the three naturally occurring canyons of Chingnunghut in Tengnoupal Hills of Manipur and Chin Hills of Myanmar. Ultimately it emptied into the Chindwin River of Myanmar.

Meiteis have now put away this gobbledygook in the trash bin of history. It then follows in its historical continuity that, as the Meiteis had settled

in the valley, which was accessible, albeit infrequently, by people living beyond the surrounding mountain ranges, they had the opportunity for enculturation of other people's cultures and habits. This led to their acquiring a more advanced state in social development, which finally led to their formation of a nation-state with an institutional Government at Kangla.

In the wake of zombie apocalypse of raising history from the dead, I may be as brazen as to say that we have established the origin of ancient Meiteis firmly in the soil of composite Manipur. It is now time for me to wander away to see how the modern Meiteis and other communities have been doing in Manipur in the second half of the 20th century. My ambit only encompasses as far back as 1941 in Imphal.

Japanlan came to Manipur in 1942 and ended in 1945. Until then, Meiteis had been living happily in Manipur in their own little ways. They paid little attention to the world outside of their Sana Leibak Manipur. They had been living mollycoddled by the protective British paramountcy from 1891.

Meitei men did not have to go anymore to the Palace for Lalupkaba. There was no more soldiering and fighting for the king in skirmishes with the surrounding tribal villagers and for an invasion of the neighbouring countries like Tripura, Assam or Burma, Naga hills and Lushai hills.

Following independence in 1947, Meiteis had to become familiar in a changing world. It was the beginning of a new world. All the European colonial empires were disintegrating and new superpowers, the erstwhile Soviet Union (USSR) and the Unites Stares (US) were rising.

The US gave 13 billion Dollars in economic support to help rebuild the European economies. In the 1970's Britain, it was the punch line of stand-up comedians that if a country wants to have a quick economic prosperity,

it is to wage a war with America and get defeated, like Germany and Japan.

Meiteis had to fillet and rebuild Manipur with their bare hands with trepidation and not without forebodings. They began to realise they could not live anymore in the same naively optimistic and solipsistic lifestyle, to which they had been used for times out of mind.

They did make efforts in state-building. Naturally, progress was slow as highly educated Meiteis were only a few. I could count them on my fingers. Meiteis without education, had trouble forging ahead in life. Among those educated in Manipur, politicians were scarcer than hen's teeth. It was the era of Rock Bottom economics. There could not be education without money.

Jobs were hard to find. Only some of them could open small shops to eke out their living. There were no big or small industries. The only cottage industry of weaving on the handlooms was killed by the Japanlan. They had to start from scratch.

What was more? Those who had joined the educated elite continued to pull the ladder up as part of our Meitei national character. And to make matters worse, Meitei politicians of the major Manipur State Congress, who had a chip on their shoulders, would not accept Meiteis as 'tribals', when the government of India sought their views for categorising communities in the Indian Constitution in 1950s.

Their highfaluting posture was partly because of their lack of knowledge as politicians, of the benefits that would accrue from being categorised as 'tribals'. So, they missed out on the goodies which tribals get under the Indian Constitution.

Higher education in Manipur, was started only when Manipur Arts College was founded by a few like-minded educationalists in 1946.

Konjengbam Gouro BA, Headmaster of Johnstone High School was the first Principal (officiating) for 4 months until a retired Khasi professor RR Thomas was appointed Principal (9.12.46 to 31.5.47) for a year, to help in setting up the college with his experience.

Classes of the college were held temporarily at the old Johnstone School and later at the New Johnstone School until a new college building was constructed near Thangmeiband. The college was named DM College (Dhanamanjuri College) with a donation of Rupees 10,000 by Maharani Dhanamanjuri, popularly known as Ngangbi Maharani, on August 6, 1946.

DM College soon emerged as one of the most popular colleges of the Northeast, by way of capturing top academic positions in most disciplines, as well as in sports and other extra-curricular activities. The public interest in education has now brought Manipur at least on par, if no better, with other sister states in the Northeast.

Up to date of December 28, 2021, there are 3 medical colleges, 3 Central universities, 3 State universities and 3 private Universities.

As I look back on to the past, retrospectively, and gleefully, I can see with my mind's eyes, how peaceful Imphal was, following the end of Japanlan. It was leafy and natural with many urbanised hamlets that were intersected by rutted and pocked access roads and narrow lanes, such as, Uripok, Sagolband, Yaiskul, Thangmeiband and others.

Khwairamband Bazaar was usually deserted during the morning and day. Between 9 and 10 in the mornings, many students, both boys and girls from Imphal West, walked along this main road to Johnstone High school, and farther to Churachand and Tamphasana Girls' High schools. There were only three or four girls who rode bicycles to Tamphasana School, while many boys rode bicycles to their high schools.

By the early '50s, a facial uplift of Imphal Town centre began to take place. Many brick-built buildings were coming up, mostly owned by Meiteis. Many shops selling modern goods came up as many Meiteis became more entrepreneurs.

The three cinema Halls in the Sadar Bazaar were always jam-packed in the evenings as whole families would come to see Hindi movies. The Sadar Bazaar in the evenings, became the haunt and meeting place for boys. It was like Hazratganj in Lucknow or Civil Lines in Allahabad, or the erstwhile Chowringhee in Calcutta.

Khwairamband Bazaar was in an area called the British Reserve, which covered about 4.7sq m. It stretched from Thangmeiband in the north to Police Lane in Yaiskul in the south. It was contained in the west by the Naga River, and in the east by the Imphal River.

The British Reserve meant British territory, with its own police force of about five or six men. It was beyond the jurisdiction of the native law. Laisram Manaobi Singh with the rank of ASI (Assistant sub inspector) was in charge. During and after the War, he owned the Friend's Talkies.

The British Reserve in the Imphal town centre was lit up with streetlamps, including the Kangla Fort, which became a cantonment to station a battalion of 4<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles.

The Ima Keithel, part of Khwairamband Keithel, was the biggest women's market in Asia. It was on the northern side of the main intersecting Kangla to Kangchup road. There were rows of parallel stalls stretching from south to north. The foundation was earth surrounded by low brick walls. They were roofed with semi-circular corrugated iron sheets and were open on both sides. Women traders sat behind their wares, back-to-back.

There was a huge statue of Keithel Lairembi (market deity) between the southern ends of Ima market and the main intersecting road. The northern ends of these rows of stalls were separated by a narrow pedestrian path from the rows of two-storey Marwari buildings that lined the street of Maxwell Bazaar along the banks of Nambul River.

The Kasturichand building on this side of the street was the most well-known. It was adjacent to a swing bridge across the Naga River that connected the bazaar with Naga mapal road.

At dusk, Khwairamband Bazaar was like a dark sky with twinkling little stars, as tiny lights from the burning of small sticks of pine wood, began to illuminate the stalls one by one, with all the saleswomen (Ima) sitting behind them.

Between the north end of Maxwell Bazaar and the Major Khun, there was an open space that ended at a crossroads. It had a Sunday market called Hao Keithel – Hao market, for hill dwellers. They could buy meat, home-brew alcohol and live stray dogs for food.

Many pi-dogs were so wild that they had to be held and led with a rope that passed through a 1.5 m length of bamboo, to prevent them biting the handlers. It was mostly Tangkhuls who bought dogs for food. It is a delicacy for them, as it is in Korea.

By mid- 1950's, for many students including me, and businessmen, having been outside Manipur so often, the world had become our oyster. The big wide world was no more a strange place. We Meitei youth in Manipur, became part of it. We became more liberal-minded and began to long for a common identity for all the ethnic communities in Manipur as Manipuris. Racial profiling of Hill people became old hat.

This is not a statement with tongue in cheek. By the early 1960s, decades of old prejudice against Pangal Muslims by Meiteis was also beginning to ebb away.

I knew a young Muslim girl who had a gorgeous face with perfect brown eyes and long eyelashes. She had a full head of medium length wavy hair. She was the heart throb of many contemporary Meitei boys. Pangal boys were not educated then. She was known as Pangal Sanahanbi. Only recently, I came to know her real name is Fazilat Ahmed.



Pangal Sanahanbi 1961.

Following her university education, she became a socialite in high society in Imphal. She was often invited at religious functions, often entering Meitei Kitchens. Her good looks and Meitei name made her fraternity with Meiteis more acceptable, while young Meiteis defied convention and got rid of attitudes that would be deemed prejudiced.

Her father's name was Bashir Uddin Ahmed. He was a Minister of the Manipur State Interim Council in 1947 (cf. Part 8) with MK Priyobrata (ex-Chief Minister) as Chairman. They lived near Babupara. She went to Tamphasana Girls' High School and matriculated in 1951. She was the

first Muslim girl in Manipur to do so. She did her BA from Gauhati and MA from Poona. She now lives in London, having survived her husband with two daughters and a son.

Unfortunately, while the educated Meitei youngsters became more secular and libertarian, the College educated hill-dwelling youth in Manipur, became obsessed with ethnonationalism and breaking up of Manipur into Nagalim, Kukilam and so on (Author's Book Points to Ponder, pp 147-153).



WC Irengbam Basanta.



Col Irengbam Devendra.

Talking of which. I may be allowed to take liberty to paraphrase the inherent Meitei spirit of fighting, by citing some matter-of-fact paradigm. That, the Indian Army has more officers from this tiny Manipur, mostly Meiteis, as per capita ethnic populations of India. I have five nephews - high ranking Army and Air force officers in my family.

There are two Meitei brigadiers and two Lt Generals up to date, now retired. I know one personally, Lt Gen Konsam Himalay Singh, PVSM, UVSM, AVSM, and YSM. He is highly decorated for his military skills. He was awarded Youth Seva Medal for his successful mission to dislodge Pakistani troops from Point 5770 during the vicious Kargil war.

If certain economy with the truth is what is needed in the context of dovelike Meitei youth, I have no doubt that the present conciliatory

Meitei youth will rise like the Phoenix from the ashes, to defend any attempt to break up Manipur Sana Leibak. They would not let go a piece of Manipur's history without a fight.

Much water has run under the Maharani Thong. By this year of 2020, and the approaching final stage of Indo-Naga Peace talks, I feel that the storm of ethnic nationalism in Manipur will pass away like a whiff of malodour, and that we stop dredging the sour Grapes.



Lt Col Irengbam Babudhon. Major Irengbam Gregory.



Major Naorem Deepak.

To say that perspectives in Manipur have changed by 2020 is not a profound overstatement. The sophisticated new generations of Meiteis with neoliberal thoughts and laissez-faire economics have begun to think of a sustained growth as the measure to achieve their progress.

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And, as an old doyen with growing love handles, I am very happy to be able to write these memories. I am looking forward to a brighter and more harmonious future for all Manipuris. I know divisive rhetoric and polarisation hinders progress.

The future of Sana Leibak Manipur is bright and beautiful. Love it, strive it and work it.



