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The Historical Settlement of Nepalis/Gorkhas in the Hills of Manipur: A Study on the Northern Region of Kangpokpi

Dr. S. Abrar*

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Abstract

This paper analyses the socio-historical migration, the politics of space and regional integration of the Nepali/Gorkha populations in Manipur's northern hill district of Kangpokpi from the late19th century to the early 21st century. Using primary archival documents, Durbar orders, and localized field interviews, the study follows how a community taken as colonial military and service contingents was transformed into a permanent, settled agrarian community. During this period, the colonial administration introduced a significant spatial measure—the establishment of the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Area (KKGRA) in 1915–1916. This made the regularized of the nomadic khutti (pastoral) system of grazing land and generating colonial revenue through grazing and foreigners' taxes, but ignited demographic and ecological conflict with the indigenous Kuki and Naga tribes over land use and destruction of crops. After being established as a reserved area, Nepali settlement sites were sprung up in the area including Irang areas/Plains which connected since 1920 and even had two panchayats in colonial era-Irang and Kangpokpi.

The study highlights a decisive turning point when, in 1946, the KKGRA was de-reserved, forcing Gorkhas to take up wet-rice cultivation and acquire pattas (individual land titles), which were registered with the valley-based Sekmai Sub-Deputy Collectorate. During the post-colonial

* PhD, Independent Researcher, Manipur, India sohailabrar2121@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5791-5779

phase, state-induced eviction notices were precipitated by the deluge of Gorkha migrants—spurred on by the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 and the temporary suspension of the permit system. In a series of landmark cases like CC Revenue Case No. 47/1958 and through Forest Settlement officers' physical verification in 1965, the Gorkhas won legality under land tenure and the historic villages of the Gorkhas were exempted from the notified reserved forest. Politically the community developed from the traditional headmen and Gorkha specific Panchayats to popular democratic representation. This was preceded by the denotification of the Kangpokpi Assembly Constituency from reserved seat in 1974 and the subsequent assimilation of Gorkha settlements into the Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council (ADC) in 2012. On the whole, this paper captures how the Gorkhas of Kangpokpi have deftly negotiated a complex frontier terrain to stake out a viable, politically-engaged and culturally distinctive home within Manipur's multi-ethnic matrix.
***Keywords**: Nepali/Gorkha, British, KKGRA, Irang, Kangpokpi, ADC and Panchayat*

Introduction

Manipur is located in two geographical regions- the hills and the valley. Of the total 22, 327 sq km, approx. 90% of the land is hilly in nature. Before 2016, the state had 9 districts 5 of which were in the hills. They are Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul, Chandel and Churachandpur. With the state government order of 2016, the number of districts became 16, where 10 of them are in hill regions. The new districts created are Tengnoupal, Pherzawl, Noney, Kamjong and Kangpokpi (split from the current districts). There are 7 Assembly constituencies in the hills where the Nepalis settled and are Kangpokpi, Tadubi, Karong, Saitu, Saikul, Tengnoupal and Ukhrul. The hill region is settled down by many ethnic groups of the state. They are several tribes of Naga and Kuki, Meitei, Pangal and Nepalis. The Nepalis were mostly scattered in the hilly region or in the vicinity of hilly areas to their favourable conditions of acquiring a large number of wastelands, forest lands, grazing lands, agricultural land and places for animal rearing. As far as the hill districts are concerned, Kangpokpi

(formerly Sadar hills of Senapati) has the largest Nepali settlement and the rest are dispersed in some pockets in the other districts.

According to 2001 census, there is 33419 out of 45998 in Nepali population in the hill districts excluding 3 Divisions whereas as per 1991 census, the hill districts specially Senapati district had 32000 plus (32, 984) out of 46498 Nepali population. In 2011, the tehsils /subdivisions where Nepali people were in majority are Sadar hills west (33%) and Saitu Gamphazol (9.54%) and Maram (LSI 2011). It is reported that the Senapati district then had a whopping 39039 Nepali population in the hills out of the 63756 total population (Ibid). And more than 43000 Nepalis are settled in the hills. The present Kangpokpi district alone accounted for more than 2/3rd the total population. The Nepalis are mostly Hindus by religion followed by some Christian and few Buddhists. The reduction in the number of Nepali in Senapati District in 2001 was due to excluded of three subdivisions in the north by the government due to unnatural growth of the population. There are 8112 Nepali population in these three divisions particularly in Mao-Maram in 2011 and with this this figure, there is more than 32000 Nepali population in Kangpokpi district alone.

Some of the largest settlement of Nepali in the northern district of Kangpokpi are Irang, Maohing, Toribari, Santolabari-Prassain, Paspati, Kalapahar, and Charhazare-Motbung while the largest villages in Senapati districts are Maram, Lairouching, Taphou, Karong, Maram Khunou, Gurung Khutthi and Katomei. The topographical and environmental condition of the hilly region are favourable to Nepali community in their settlement along without any objection of the native people. The region has a large area of wasteland, forest fringe, hilly slope, plain area, fertile soil and less population which attracted them. The regions had the historical movement of the Nepalis after the Anglo-Manipur War 1891. They started settled down in the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Areas specially after the 1st World War and expanded rapidly after the 2nd world war following the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 and its subsequent agreements

and changes in foreigners acts from time to time. After the delimitation of 1973 the Kangpopkpi was converted to a general seat facilitating/allowing or accommodating the Nepali settlers by then Lt Governor in 1974 and thereafter there is direct contest between the Nepalis and Kukis in the state election where initial three terms were won by the Nepali candidate named Kishore Thapa.

Name of Sub-division	Name of Village	Population			2023	
		2001	2011	Household	Houseehold	Voters
(A) Sadar Hills West	Amaledara	192	254	50	29	169
	Bajegara	280	274	41	26	147
	Chandraman	141	166	29	28	169
	Ghimirethari	452	542	83	60	280
	Gopibung Nepali	518	462	79	65	270
	Gorkha Harup	559	520	87	67	379
	Gorkha Tapan	949	1082	147	98	580
	Harup Khapi	501	646	101	88	476
	Haspukhri	247	284	47	23	120
	Jhil	231	247	38	30	152
	Kalapahar-Lower	1479	1725	302	277	1776
	Kalapahar-Upper	412	472	61	80	432
	Khar-khola	325	381	62	54	323
	Karpani	227	293	47	24	119
	kolghari	90	158	24	15	79
	Lamchok	426	447	93	40	228
	Lungphow Nepali	362	328	50	37	132
	Mahabir	352	233	50	30	116
	Manedada				33	141
	Manidara	307	466	76	29	131
	Maohing Nepali	1338	1613	249	155	764
	Naibet	405	421	72	50	287
	Nunpani	476	510	76	80	462
	Panikheti	191	166	29	20	115
	Paudel Basti/9th	1118	1195	214	135	772
	Parsain	422	561	98	64	323
	Paspati	788	500	76	104	436
	Rijal Tahar	148	194	34	21	127
	Setikhola	352	331	56	38	168
	Shantolabari	665	655	111	79	438
	School Praganda	321	251	41	25	109
	Songpejang Nepali	420	397	60	64	355
	Tahar basti	442	384	68	61	269
	Thulochaur	235	315	59	25	136

	Timsina	368	307	58	33	151
	Tokpa Nepali	522	559	182	61	327
	Toribari	1207	786	135	145+22*	766+1
	Makuli				28	164
Total	34 villages	1433				
(B) Saitu-Gampazol	Charhajare	2128	2760	488	385	2346
	Kabru Leikha	686	662	95	92	451
	Kolpejang Nepali	210	165	32	40	136
	Motbung Nepali	384	683	114	103+	666+
	Seloi	64	220	54		
Total	5 villages	2372				
Total A + B	39 villages	1671				

**Included the part of Kangpokpi Assembly segment*

Table 1: Nepali Population in Sadar Hills Sub-divisions of Senapati District, Census 2001 and 2011

Materials and Methods:

The method used in the paper is based mainly on historical approach/study of qualitative method but also extensive field-works and interviews are being taken for the purpose. During the field-works, the photography and videography were taken of the villages and settlement patterns are explored. The materials used in the paper are mainly based on primary sources of archival data available at the state archive includes both colonial and state works as well as secondary sources of articles, journals, thesis/dissertation and books. It includes the colonial works and reports, Durbar resolutions/proceedings while post-colonial works of State Gazette, Administration reports, census and electoral data. To verify the authenticity of the data, the external and internal criticism method are being applied before generalization and interpretation.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the paper is to attempt documentation of the Nepali settlement in the state of Manipur through the archival sources specially the Kangpokpi district. For this, the following objectives are used as follows:

1. Identifying the settlement sites/villages of the Nepali in the whole Kangpokpi district including periphery areas with valley

2. Exploration of the Nepali villages and their settlement pattern in the district

3. Understanding their historical settlement and livelihood condition socially, politically and economically.

Discussion:

The Settlement Areas Of Nepali/Gorkha Community In Kangpokpi:-

Irang Areas:

It is collectively name of villages located on the Imphal-Tamenglong Road between Tamei and Kangpokpi's Maohing, some 40 km away west of Kangpokpi. There are many plain areas beside the Irang river, which flows in that region along the highway. It is inhabited by Naga and Kuki tribes and Nepalis. The place is a very suitable for agriculture and animal grazing in the vacant/empty hilly slopes. The Nepalis are scattered all over the areas in their favourable conditions.

Historically the settlement of Nepali was began in the areas before the 1st world war. As early as in 1920 in Irang valley, there were 165 families of Gorkha graziers around 940 population (Clarke 1920). The area is 8 miles long and 3-4 miles broad where Neibet is the last Gorkha village on the highway. After the creation of Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Area in around 1916, there was an order issued by Political Agent, L.O. Clarke in 1920 restricting the establishment of goth beyond certain limit/ boundaries in the Irang valley for accommodating the Nepali graziers to stay close or compact settlement. There was some practices of cultivation of rice in the area by then where it was totally prohibited/banned. However they had allowed to move to KKGRA for grazing if not sufficient the land. The population has gradually increased in the area due to migration of Nepalis from other areas of the state specially Kanglatongbi where there was already increased the number of cattle and buffaloes which made

conflicts with the neighbouring tribes and exploitation of forests. The area was divided into two parts- Irang Part-I and II in 1938 by the order of the political agent due to increase of population both people and animal and security purpose (Acharya 2019: 145).

One Shri Sher Bahadur Ale was vested as village authority Headman of Irang as early as 1920-21 and it was continued recently even under Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956 (Sinha, Subba 2003: 314)[*]. In the 1930s when the state was divided into 40 panchayats, one was established for Gorkhas in Irang panchayat (Acharya 2019: 89, 139). It follows from this that by the 1930s there were already a significant number of Nepali families in the area, which had become a separate entity.It was evidenced by the appointment order of Political Agent on behalf of Manipur State Durbar that Biru Bhujel was appointed as Member of Irang panchayat after the death of the Budhiman Bhujel and one Lachaman Jaisi Ghimeri as the President of the panchayat (Ibid: 148). It is also mentioned in the tour diary of C. Gimson, Political Agent, Manipur, of 1934-35. In 1937, Shivalal Parajuli was appointed as a member of the Panchayat of Irang Panchayat (Ibid: 148).

The Gorkha graziers of the Irang Panchayat formed the Graziers Co-operative Society during 1936 to enhance the production of milks, ghee and butter for consumption and supply (Gimson 1936-37). In 1938, the grazing area of Irang also was expanded from 5 miles of Nabet to Laloi in the south, and Shenjang Pakhang Khulen and Thonglang village area loosely called Baijung and Nungkham (Gimson 1938)[†]. This means graziers made

[*] The village authority in the Nepali settlement areas of Irang was appointed by the order of the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Kangpokpi dated 06-05-2008 and was challenged thereby after judgement of Manipur High Court, in the case of W. Ranchong vs The State of Manipur on 25 March, 2021 related to WP© no. 911 of 2018, the appointment was quased.

[†] C. Gimson, Political was the longest serving British Political Agent of Manipur, 1933-46 which had toured the state witnessed the Nepali settlement in Kangpokpi areas by providing three Foreigners Panchayats-Kanglatongbi, Irang Got and Kangpokpi.

incursion deep into the hills beyond their prior grazing land with the help of the British. There was a lot of conflicts between the Nepalis and Hillmen for devastated and destroyed the crops of the latter often as documented from the Tour Diary of Political Agent of Manipur.

By the President order, the Manipur State Durbar in 1946, Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Gorkha Reserve Area ceased to be a reserved area and was converted into an area for cultivation because of growing population and the land was confined for cultivation from 1st December, 1946 (Pearson 1946). Those Gorkha families who desired to continue the profession of grazier were instructed to shift to the Irang areas; the rest who wished to take up wet rice cultivation could do so within the confines of the reserve area. Many Gorkha families moved from KKGRA are settled in Irang areas for those who abandoned animal husbandry or grazing as profession. The Nepali still continues to pay the grazing tax in the district. After merged with India followed by Indo-Nepal Treaty and removal of permit system, many Nepalis/Gorkhas were went/enter to Irang areas both from internal and external migration in the state which led to increase the population of the Nepalis in the area. Subsequently many villages were coming up between the Kangpokpi and Tamei area. Earlier, there are 29 villages of Nepali in the Irang Part I and Part II respectively but now decrease to 25 villages. In addition thereto, the name of these two villages are shown in the list of Nepalese Gwallas in the Northern Circle, West Sub-division, 1946-47 (Sanajaoba 1993: 431; Unknown vs the State of Manipur 2021).

However, since there is yet to be a full survey of the entire Irang region, no proper head count of the Nepali population and their household in the region is available, and it is impossible to ascertain how many Nepalis have settled in the region, as they are scattered throughout the valley. The Irang area is today under the Sadar Hills District Council, Kangpokpi district (erstwhile Senapati) and also under the Kangpokpi Assembly segment. Panchayat system was abolished from the hill district in 2012 but

the people of Irang is still enjoying the ADC election as before having their both voting rights and contest it in either elected or nominated by the state govt. Even today, their main occupation is cattle-rearing, and grazing, in the present of the vast hilly tracts and favourable environment condition but cultivation of rice and crops are assuming new forms and shapes in the region.

Sl no.	Name of Village	Name of Village
1	Lamchok	Kharpani
2	Ghimirathari	Makui Asang
3	Dalthari	Naibet
4	9 Miles/Paudel Basti	Timsina
5	12 Miles	Thaldara
6	Chuchekhop	Rijal Tahar
7	School Praganda	Gorkha Tapon
8	Tahar Basti	Khakare
9	Manedada	Bajaghara
10	Dhodeghari	Gorkha Harup
11		Jhil
12		Panikheti
13		Haspokhri
14		Tulochour
15		Kolghari

Table 2: The list of villages in Irang Valley

Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Areas:

The areas between Kanglatongbi and Kangpokpi were filled and occupied by the dense forests and hilly slopes of the mountain ranges with some local tribes settled down in the area. The areas was started inhabited by Nepalis soon after the creation of grazing reserve area in around 1916-19. The Nepalis were already settled down in the area by the British support for their retired/ex-servicemen as rewards and rehabilitation along with their family or settled down in the areas by the retired Nepali soldiers by taking up cattle farming. As a result they were settled down mostly along the foothill areas during the colonial period. As there was no much Nepalese there was less number of villages until 1950 when gradually increased their population in the post independent aftermath due to revoke of permit

system, migration from neighbouring areas and Indo-Nepal Treaty. Some of the important places in the reserved area are Motbung, Charhazare, Koubru Leikha, Kalapahar, Toribari, Kangpokpi, Santolabari-Prassain, Paspati, Tokpa Nepali, Maohing, and many others. All these areas were once under the Kangpokpi and Kanglatongbi panchayat. Beyond Kangpokpi the grazing of animals were banned which was later for time extended to Karong areas (Gimson 1938; Manipur State Durbar 1939). There was hardly cultivation of rice in the area until around 1940 with the permission of political agent (Shiwakoti 2012: 32). As a result of population increased and need for land to cultivation, the grazing reserve area was de-reserved in 1946 by the order of Manipur State Durbar and allowed them to settle in the area only to those want to cultivate wet-rice cultivation and animal grazing was not allowed and banned (Pearson 1946). The vast grazing reserve area was converted into cultivation land and more and more lands were brought for it later on up to the foothills[*].

The number of cattles and buffaloes were so much increased that led to over exploiting of the area including forest areas and even went out for grazing beyond Kanglatongbi and Kangpokpi which led to the order of 1938 by the then Political Agent limiting the number of animals in the reserved area to be reared (Subba et.al. 2009: 220). When 40 Panchayats were granted in the state in 1930s by the British, there was two Nepali panchayats in the hill mentioned above but there also one panchayat in Imphal for the Gorkhali settlement (Judicial Dept. 1936; Gimson 1934-35; Durbar Proceeding-MSD 1937; Durbar Resolution 1933). The Kangpokpi Panchayat hall is still there in Kangpokpi even today (Adminstrative Report 1945-46). After the 2nd World War the then Settlement Officer had ordered on behalf of the Manipur State Durbar to the Headman of Kangpokpi village, Shri Bishnu Prasad Uppadhya and informed him to divide the land among the Gorkhas settled around Kangpokpi (Dev 1947). Accordingly he

[*] FF Pearson was the last British Officer serving as First Interim Chief Minister and helped a lot in the formulation of Manipur State Constitution Act 1947

had divided the entire paddy land for cultivation of wet-rice to various Gorkha settlers in the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi areas. In this way they had been given the pattaland for rice-cultivation and started settlement around this places. Thereafter 1947, there was less movement of Nepali in the state due to strict guarded in Mao.

But after 1950 the thing had changed gradually due to abolish of permit system and treaty of 1950 and subsequent removal of Nepali citizen from the Foreigner (Protected Areas) Act, 1958. There was a flood of migrant entry into the state and occupying these tracts of lands between Kanglatongbi and Kangpokpi areas. This was reported in the Manipur Territorial Council in 1957-58. Since the areas were located on the NH-39, they slipped easily into these far flung areas and settled down there without any problem. In 1974 the Kangpokpi Assembly Constituency was converted into general seat to allow the Nepalis to contest election where the population was more or less than the native population in the area.

After the creation of Gorkha Reserved areas, there was report of appointed headman of the revenue village by the British where some records are available for such appointment in the areas like Kanglatongbi, Prasain Basti, Kalapahar and Irang. There was a lot of conflicts and cases within and beyond the reserved areas between the hillmen and Nepalis and also between graziers over the grazing land, construction of gots and crops destroyed by the animals which led to often tour in and around the reserved areas by the political agents. One such conflict was over the Kuiraopokpi (Motbung) between Kanglatongbi and Supermeina over the land and gots (FMSD 1940). There was also mentioned of many epidemic and diseases which led to death of many cows and buffaloes in the reserved areas. These cases was documented from the Tour Diary of the British Political Agent. By 1920s the Gorkhas were resided in many places within the reserved areas along many cows and buffaloes which was encouraged by the British for the supply of meat, milk, ghee and other allied products to the officers and soldiers.

When the UP Panchayat Raj act 1947 was implemented in Manipur in 1968, out of three Nepali Gram panchayat, Kangpokpi and Keithelmanbi were in the hills. In 1978 all of them excluded from the proposed state panchayat act due to unknown reason, perhaps overlapping with ADC Act but after court intervention, 5 Gram Panchayats along a Zila Parishad were given to them. They were Kanglatongbi GP, Koubru Lekha GP, Santolabari Prassain GP, Kalapahar GP and Toribari GP. All these located within the present Kangpokpi district. This was followed until abolition in 2012, the areas were became a part and partial of the ADC under the hill districts and some were elected/ nominated in the ADC. The areas are covered under the Manipur Hill Area District Council Act 1971. Today there is no much Nepali settlers around the Kangpokpi centre but spread out all over the Saitu-Gamphazol and Sadar Hills west sub-division. The main centre are Charhazare, Kalapahar, Koubrulekha, Paspati, Santolabari, Prassain, Motbung, Toribari, Lungphou Nepali, Maohing, Songpehjang, and Noonpani. As per 2011 census the Charhazare and Kalapahar are the largest Nepali villages having large population of 2760 with 488 households and 2200 with 363 households respectively in the hill districts. The cultivation of rice and crops are their main economic and livelihood activities beside cattle rearing.

The accounts of Administration Reports clearly revealed the fact that the settlement of Nepalis were very bad damaged and fled the villages during the 2nd world war. Many were lost and some of them came back to resettled in the areas in which they settled before the war as old residents of Manipur. When they settled down there, the government issued an Eviction order against them on the proposed reserved areas. On 1st August, 1958, Shri Ganesh Prasad Parasai and 58 others Gorkhas families filed an CC Revenue Case No. 47 of 1958 against the eviction order passed by the EAC (Rev) in the court of Shri J.M. Raina, IAS, Chief Commissioner of Manipur (Acharya, 2019: 108). The Chief Commissioner disposed the case in favour of the Gorkhas familes with the condition that they should

paid the arrears and current land revenue while those are unable to clear up should be evicted (Ibid: 138). Some of the important villages are given briefly below:

Toribari:

The village is situated 5 km away from present Kangpokpi district in Sadar Hills West sub-division of Manipur. It has a population of 786 with about 135 households in 2011 decreased from 1207 in 2001. The village had been under the Toribari Gram Panchayat till 2012. As per the available data of Durbar Resolution no. 20 of 22-01-1947 of the Manipur State Durbar and subsequent order of its President, Shri Bishnu Prasad Upadhya, Rup Narayan Upadhya, Punya Prasad Upadhya and Shri Man Singh Chhetri after their request were allowed and obtained the permission for lands for settlement and to keep 25 buffaloes each to supply milk to Kangpokpi Mission before (Ibid: 104). For this they obtained a large part of land including Thulojheel known as Mokulikhot (present Makuli) as their village grazing land by an order of the Durbar of the same year (Ibid). They were the first to settled down in the Toribari village and the pioneer of the Gorkhas community where one Rup Narayan was contested in 1962 election to Manipur Territorial Council in Sagolmang.

There was reported of 38 families in 1965 from the spot verification by the Forest Settlement Officer staying in the area back 40/60 years following the eviction cases of 1958 and 1959 regarding the Reserve forest areas (Ibid: 105, 111). There was no doubt already present of graziers in and around Kangpokpi as mentioned above supplying the milk and ghee to the British officials and army camps before the 2nd world war started as practiced of Khuttis around the Kangpokpi (Cosgrave 1918).

The Cultivation of rice and crops are their basic source of income beside animal rearing along with service in the armed forces. Currently it is under the Tadubi Assembly segment of Senapati district but under the Kangpokpi Block. They are still paying the grazing tax to the block and some of them who have pattas are paying revenue tax to Sekmai SDC.

Songpejang Nepali:

It is located just above the Toribari village on the IT Road in just a km away, 5.4 km from Kangpokpi town. The Nepali settlement in the area began after 1950 more or less same with the Toribari. The father of the present chairman Budhimal Basney (the former member of the panchayat), ex-soldeir of 11th Assam Rifles, Mantripukhri posted in 1945 started the settlement by buying the land from the local chief of Sopehjang Kuki village, Thangsabung Kuki in around 1949 and brought it by the migrant Nepalis from Assam, Sikkim and others there in the 1950s and 1960s (Bashe 2022). It was recognized as a village in 1952 as per informant. In 1961 there was 75 houses (84 households) with 380 Nepali population along 32 tribal population*. They have the Patta Khat Dag and paying the grazing tax to the Kangpokpi block. Undoubtedly they live by farming and cattle breeding, while some of them also join the Central forces. They still supply the milk to the Kangpokpi town and Porompat centre about 400 litre annually/monthly. Currently there is 560 Nepali population with 80 households under the Saitu Constituency and working under the chairman given incharge of the village for development activities.

Nungphou Nepali

It is located on the same IT Road about Songpehjang, 6.4 km from Kangpokpi town. It is under Tadubi constituency of Senapati district but within the Kangpokpi block. As per informant, the village was started in 1959 under Nungphou kuki chief and having paying house tax and grazing tax since then and later on, only paying the Grazing tax to the Kangpokpi block through the village chief (Bahadur 2022). In 1961 census, there was about 50 houses with 250 Nepali population in Nungphou with 66 tribal population†. The village was a part of erstwhile Toribari Gram panchayat and currently under the ADC Kangpokpi. The main occupation are

* Interview with Budhiman Bashe, Songpehjang Chairman- dated 30th October 2022

† Interview with Rudra Bahadur, Nungphou chairman- dated 30th October 2022

cultivation and animal rearing. There was 362 Nepali population in 2001 and 328 with 50 households in the village in 2011.

Maohing:

It is also located on the same IT road above Nungphou village, just 10 km from Kangpokpi town under the Tadubi Constituency and part of erstwhile Toribari gram panchayat. As per available record the Nepali started settled down in 1930s as mentioned of a Gurkhali headman in Maohing which was complaint by the Nepali graziers through the petitions in 1934 (Gimson 1934-35). After the creation of Gurkha Reserve, there was frequent movements of the Nepalis in and out the reserve and Irang areas for grazing their animals. But later on, the new comers Nepali migrants filled the village in 1950s and 1960s which is evident by the present of a Buddhist Monastery called Sangdungba Gumba established in1970 by one Lakpa Sherpa in Upper Maohing 7th Mile, IT Road. In 1961 there was more than 200 houses with 982 Nepali population. There was 1338 Nepali population in 2001 and 1613 with 249 households in 2011 as per census.

The majority of the population belong to Hindu (70%) followed by Buddhist and Christianity. They held the patta katcha having Dag no. While cultivation and rearing animals are their main activities. They even continue to supply about 200 litres monthly/quarterly milk to Porompat centre. They enjoy both the benefits from panchayat then and now ADC. The village is divide into Upper and Lower Maohing.

Noonpani:

Likewise the Noonpani village also started settlement in 1960s as there was no mentioned about the village in 1961 list of census village. Since its location in the northern hilly slopes of the IT Road and the end of the Maohing eastern extension upto the hilly slopes on the northern side, the village is formed or separated from Upper Maohing with the coming of more Nepalis in the areas in next two decades. The village is also part of the erstwhile Toribari panchayat having different chairman of jurisdiction for

paying the grazing tax and developmental works. So the cultivation and animal rearing are their main activities. There is 476 Nepali population in 2001 and 510 with 76 households in 2011 (Census 2001, 2011).

Kalapahar:

It is located just 5 km away from Kangpokpi and 40 km north of Imphal on the NH 39. It is 2nd largest village of Nepali in the hills with 2197 population and 363 households after Charhazare in 2011. It is divided into Lower, Middle and Upper Kalapahar. It has modern basic facilities like govts' schools and Primary Health Centre along two temples and two churches belongs to Nepalis. It is the stronghold for social and political influence of the Gorkhas where many leaders are used to stay in the area like Kishore Thapa. There was 163 Nepali households with 618 population in 1961. There was mentioned of the area having prospect in cultivated wet-rice by the villagers which was forbidden hardly permitted in the Gurkha reserve areas in 1929 (Higgins 1929-30). Again it was mentioned that the political agent reported the Nepali expanding in the area and to check the registers of the foreigners on unauthorized immigration in the area and to give more rooms for the present settlers (Higgins 1931). This means that the graziers and retired soldiers were already settled down in the area with khuti practised in the area in the 1920s and was helped by the new comers in expanding the area and their population which was noticed by the British for action but still not much prevention action was taken as there was realized of huge income to the govt from their taxes levied on them in the 1930s. Earlier, there were many Nepali graziers in Keithelmanbi since 1895 to 1940 and possibly that they were moved into the neighbour forest areas which notified in the tour diary of political agents. Kalapahar was one such place which means black forest/mountain. As per informant, the villagers have their descendants before first world war and was collaborated with the creation of Gorkha reserved area.

There was also present of a workshop in Kalapahar during the 2nd world war maintained by the British for their vehicles. The land records of

the Kalapahar was repeatedly checked by the political agent to check the immigration foreigners and for increasing land revenue to the state by improving the system of collection over the time (Gimson 1939, 1939-40). Initially it was the Kangpokpi panchayat in 1968 and then transferred to Keithelmanbi in 1969 and finally in 1978 that Kalapahar panchayat was provided till 2012 covering the village. Currently the village is under the ADC system where once they also enjoyed in 1973 onwards having a Kalapahar constituency meant for the Nepalis.

Charhazare:

It also located on the NH-39 just above Kanglatongbi, some 23 km north of Imphal which has the largest Nepali village in the hills. It is under the Saitu-Gamphazol subdivision and Saitu Constituency of the Kangpokpi district. In 2001 there is 2128 Nepali population in the area and increased to 2760 Nepali Population with 488 households in 2011. Nothing is much mentioned about this village in the administration report as well as tour diary of political agents between the Kanglatongbi and Kangpokpi except Keithelmanbi, Sappermina and Kuiraopokpi (Motbung). So, the village is likely to settle down full swing after the 1960s onward with the increasing of Nepali population in the state. There was no Charhazare village mentioned in the 1961 census villages under Mao and Sadar Hills division. The area is lying between the Kanglatongbi and Motbung and likely the extension of both the areas of Kanglatongbi under 31-Kanglatongbi of land revenue record where there is Kanglatongbi War Memorial site. There is also a Vishnu Temple built in 1955 and a Bishnulal High School in 1958 started at the temple premises. This means that the Nepali population already there in 1950s under Kanglatongbi extension[*]. It is a part of Kanglatongbi panchayat (1968) but erstwhile Koubru Leikha Gram panchayat (1978) and currently under ADC system.

[*] Annual Magazine 2021-22, Bishnulal High School, Charhazare, Kangpokpi District, Manipur

During the 2nd world war, the area had been stationed by the British soldiers around 4000 thereby fought against the Japanese forces and attached the name of the village as Char Hazare. Later on the increased in revenue plot lands and population had made the present Charhazare in 1960s. Another story of the village is that the land was given as dowry to the Nepali princess, Queen Ishwori Devi when he married to King Bodhchandra in 1941.

Motbung:

It also known as Kuraopokpi in colonial period was a conflict land between the Kanglatongbi and Sapparmeina initially the place for grazing land and place for gotsheds. The area is also known as Koireng tampak and Uyung Lawai chingmai. Earlier it was filled by jungle and wasteland and there was no agricultural practiced and there was settled down of Manipuris-the Meitei and not a tribal village as per informants (Crawford 1928 and Higgins 1929-30, 1931). It was documented from the State Durbar Resolution, tour diaries and order of political agents from 1920s onwards. Few Nepali families were settled there with khuti practice before the 2nd world war and 1945-46 settlement order and expanded after the 1950 and was witnessed the welcoming of Queen Ishwori Devi (Kataora, Thapa 2022)*.

In 1961 there was about 70 households with 420 population in the area. There is 384 Nepali population in 2001 and 683 population with 114 households in 2011 (Census 2001, 2011). The main occupation of the villagers today are cultivation, soldiers and shop-keeping where the cultivation was started in 1960 onward in the area. It also once a part of Koubru Leikha Gram panchayat and currently under ADC system under Motbung constituency.

Kongpehjang Nepali:

* Interview with Motbung villagers, Krishna Kataora, with club secretary and Govind Thapa dated 23rd August 2022

The village is situated in the upper most part of the western hill side from the National Highway 39, about 15 km from Kangpokpi town. The village is under the SP Ngaimun village, a Kuki village inhabited by the Nepalis since the last 60 years. Earlier before the panchayat system was abolished in 2012 the village is under the Koubru-Leikha Gram panchayat and Saitu Assembly constituency and also enjoy the ADC system currently. The village is mostly Gurung caste inhabited and earlier there was many houses but currently about 7-9 houses with about 40 population as per informants of the village (Gurung 2022). The villagers are mostly from Sikkim and some of them move/shift to other places like Kalapahar, Kanglatongbi, etc[*]. There is 210 Nepali population in 2001 while it decreased to 165 population with 32 households which witnessed outflux to other Nepali concentrated areas and remained as ghost voters. The source of livelihood of the village are cultivation of crops and animal rearing.

Paspati:

The village Paspati is located in Champhai sub-division of Kangpokpi, 7 km away from district headquarter. It is under the erstwhile Koubru Leikha Gram panchayat and Saitu constituency. There was about 117 Nepali households with 411 population in 1961 while there was respectively 788 Nepali population in 2001 and 500 population with 76 households in 2011. The village has a mixed settled with the local Kuki population having separated villages on their own while all the Nepali settlement areas came under the Paspati (Brar 2022). As mentioned earlier, the Nepali population had been dispersed across the KKG Reserved areas, no doubt, some graziers were also present in the area in 1940s name after one Pasupati[†]. The cultivation also started during 1946-1950 and the sizeable population of Nepali started present in 1950s. They possess pattas

[*] Interview with Baghimal Gurung, an elderly of Kongpehjang Nepali- dated 29th Nov 2022

[†] Interview with Nandalal Brar of Paspati, village Chairman - dated 29th Nov 2022

and pay land revenue to Sekmai SDC. The out-flux of the population to other Nepali settlement sites are witnessed and continued due to rise of ethnic tribal consciousness over land use and right.

Koubru Leikha:

The Koubru is one of the holy sites of traditional Meitei practice, Sanamahism which is affected by the present conflict. The village is located just above the western side of the Imphal-Dimapur Road, 39 km from Imphal and 15 km from the district headquarter under Saitu-Ghamphazol subdivision and Saitu constituency. According to 2011 census, there is 95 Nepali households with 662 population in the village while it was 686 in 2001 and 376 population in 1961. The village has been under Koubru Leikha gram panchayat since 1978 and currently under Kangpokpi ADC. The village is formed in 1950s but there was already present some Nepali grazier families in 1940s specially after 1945. As per informant, one of the settler's father born in 1946 in the village and there was about 40 households during his childhood so in 1950s (Chimariya 2022)[*]. The cultivation also was started around the same time. The land was initially under the Phoibi village and bought from them and settled down later on. The name of the village was in the census village of 1961 and also at the same time the Durga Temple of the village was established in 1961. The Chettry and Tamang are the majority caste of the village with few lower caste group, Kami so enhance some sort of caste system elements in the village. They still possess the original pattas issued to them from time to time paying the land revenue to Sekmai SDC.

Santolabari Prasain Panchayat Areas:

When some Nepali villages were trying to put under the Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Forest Reserve in late 1950s and 1960s issued notice by the Deputy Commissioner, Manipur, there was many objection

[*] Intervierw with Kumar Chimariya of Koubru Leikha, village chairman- dated 1st December 2022

petitions and joint petitions by the villagers in response to it to the court of Chief Commissioners i.e. Revenue Misc Case No. 30 of 1953, case no. 51 of 1961, Revenue Appeal Case no. 47 of 1958, Misc Case no. 30 of 1959 and no. 3 of 1964 (Acharya 2019: 109-112; SDC-FSO Kangpokpi 1965). The Chief Commissioner based on the petitions were given his observations and orders according to the cases. One such case was the Case no. 47 of 1958 where he directed to settled down the 114 Nepali families who claims their early settlement in the villages affected by the war only after clearing the arrears and current land revenue to the govt. In another case there a file petition prayer for settlement in the land to their present possession by 295 persons under Devi Prasad Baskota, President of Nepali Pyabalstapak Samittee from the 15 Nepali villages in Kangpokpi.no. 30 of 1959 dated 30th July 1960.

Following the order of the Forest Settlement Officer of 1965 after the spot verification and the subsequent order of Chief Commissioner, all the Nepali villagers of Suntolabari, Amledara, Bajigara, Gopibung, Bagbir, Prasain and Toribari of total households numbering 114 were allowed to settled down permanently in the areas (Ibid). In 1965 there was 43 families in Tokpa Nepali (Ibid), 18 households in Amaledara and Bajigara, 40 families in Gopibung, 38 families in Toribari, 53 families in Manidara (Ibid), 98 families in Setikhola, Suntolabari and Bagbir (Ibid). All these areas were excluded from the then proposed K.K.R. by altering the boundaries by seeing that witnessed from the spot verification of Forest Settlement Officer where the Nepali settled down 40/50 years back before 1965 by payment of land tax and house tax to the Khullakpa of Tokpa Naga (Ibid). As look from this court case and order, no doubt some of them were already present in the area in just after the creation of Gorkha Reserve by 1915 and some were after by 1925.

After this 1965 judgement they were given the patta lands and even today they are paying this land tax and grazing tax to the govt not under any tribal chiefs. There was no mentioned of Prasain earlier in colonial record

that perhaps separated from existing Santolabari and later separated with the increase of the population in 1960s. Earlier the villages were under the Keithelmanbi panchayat (1968) and later since 1978 under one Santolabari-Prasain panchayat and currently under the ADC system. Santolabari is located on the upper side of the western hill range from Keithelmanbi valley while Prassain is known in the lower side.

As per informants of the above villages of the panchayat, the settlers were began to moving into the places by 1935 with documented pattas in 1945-46 by FF Pearson's order and the subsequent order of Settlement Officer in issuing the pattas to them after 1965. They also getting benefits of various schemes of state and central govt like in tribal development project, NREGS, Ration card, dairy programs, animal and veterinary programs, agricultural activities, sanitation, water supply and others. There is also some families belong to schedule castes group and still existing of some sort of caste system and untouchable in the traditional way. In 2011, there was 462 with 79 households in Gopibung, 655 with 111 households in Santolabari, 559 with 182 households in Tokpa Nepali, 561 with 98 households in Prasain and 233 with 50 households in Mahavir.

Others:

In addition to KK and Irang, where Nepalis initially concentrated in the hilly region of Manipur, there exist a few numerous pockets in the district. Majority of them own land either by clearing the forests at the foothills or in the plains that lie between the hills, or in the swampy-marshy land or at the forest fringes, some of them are under the chiefs of the villages come in leashed system by paying taxes and a part of their products. Historically all of these places have the prior movement of Nepalis before settlement for the purpose of grazing their cattle while the greatest majority of settlers are more recent by people moving in through internal and external means.

In Kangpokpi district, Kangpokpi town, Harup Khopi, Amaledara, Chandraman, Manedada, Junglethari, Setikhola, Kharkhola, Laikot,

Tuilangphai, Toribari a part of Kangokpi, Tumuyon Khulllen, Hengbung and M. Ningthoupham are some of the places where large numbers of Nepali can be found. Also, they are found and settled in such places as T. Waichong and Thonglang Akutpa under Tadubi tenement. There are some Nepali in some pockets of the Saikul areas. Along with that is the report that there are Nepalis in Kangchup, Tengri, Chanbilok (Chirik: Historical records) though the peoples are all new settlers from other places and Leimakhong for over one hundred families both in the plain and hill districts from around 1960.

Results:

Some of the results of the discussion are given below:

1. Historically, the presence of large Gurkha soldiers witnessed after Anglo-Manipur war 1891 and also witnessed arrival with their families and attempted by British to create a Nepali colony as done in Assam in Keithelmanbi where first noticed of the ex-serviceman settling down through cultivation and animal husbandry in 1890s and Nepalis were there until 1930s where moved to different directions which bounded by Kalaphar, Santolabari-Prassain, Gopibung, Tokpa, Paspati and Koubru Leikha. By 1900, Kanglatongbi, a periphery area/duar was already present by ex-servicemen as documented. KKGRA witnessed the largest Nepali settlements sprung out many sites later by 1920s. Irang and KKGRA were attracted by new migrant after 2nd world war for their favourable conditions for agriculture and animal husbandry. Some villages were formed after 1947 by the new comers with the merger of Manipur and abolished passport system strengthened further by Indo-Nepal Treaty and subsequent changes there after like Foreigners Acts. The govt of India order in 1988 further strengthen their settlement in the state which recognized them legally. The ex-servicemen settled in the region since 1890s sow the seeds for expanding the population in the area and later in early 1900 joined by graziers arrived via Assam.

2. Economically, they were lived in poor and unhealthy conditions as documented since 1890s but their economic activities grew strong specially cow and buffalo exports in 1900s and sometime state intervened in it and

regulated its policy banning local breeds from extinction and they even supplied the raw materials to the British officials and soldiers like meat, ghee, milk, etc. They were free to move inside reserve area but later extended upto Mao before raining season. In return, they were levied Foreigners tax and grazing tax and other trading-export tax which felt the state exchequer as revenue. The foreigners tax was abolished in 1947 but retained the grazing tax in the district. In post-colonial, they took part in the state forces in maintaining law and order and other low grade jobs. Today, with the access of the education and health sector with the growing economic condition, they take part in govt services specially in central forces, white collar jobs and trade and business supported by the highway passing through the district.

3. Politically, they are present mostly in Kangpokpi and Saitu-Gamphazol sub-division of Kangpokpi with few pockets in Saikul. Most of the Nepali population are divided between Saitu ST and Kangpokpi seat while some villages are with the Kangpokpi block, they are part of Tadubi Senapati seat. Kangpokpi was created in 1973 and remained as general seat after convert in 1974 and became the political hotspot of the Nepalis where the first three terms were held by one Kishore Thapa. After the 1993 Naga-Kuki ethnic riot, things were changed demographically and never won again but continue to contest the seat even today. Earlier, they were given the panchayats by the British to make them permanently settled them down there in Irang and Kangpokpi and the same legacy was continued after 1968 to 2012 in the district. In present they are under the ADC system where they also represented in 3-4 seats specially from Irang part 1 and II. There was also witnessed earlier in headman system specially in Irang areas and today as a chairman/Gaon Burrah representing the village.

4. Geographically, they are present in the western mountain range of the Sadar west subdivision-eastern KK areas from Charhazare to Kangpokpi and western side-Irang plain. The dereserved of KKGRA in 1946 for cultivation was made old settlers as cultivators from temporary nomadic or pastoral life into permanent settlers and further attracted the new comers in the region before reaching Imphal. After 1950, the region was drastically changed with new migrants/foreigners from Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and Sikkim along Indian states of Assam and Darjeeling-Siliguri region of West

Bengal (notified in MTC Resolution 1957). The population of Nepali was about 3000 to 13500 in 1961, 37000 in 1981 and 63000 in 2011. There are more or less than 50 Nepali villages with some pockets where Irang alone has 25 villages in Kangpokpi district. The erstwhile Senapati district, now bifurcated, initially the Nepalis were present in this northern region and continued even today where 2/3rd of their population is in the district. The whole of Manipur was expanded by the Nepalis in their grazing as documented reaching Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Tengnoupal and Tamenglong but they were forced to back in Kangpokpi due to the Kuki rebellion of 1917-1919. Many villages are today nearly empty and remain as ghost voters as outflux continues due to various reasons.

5. Legacy-

A. Foreigners tag was abolished and replaced by domiciled community in 1947 by independent Manipur

B. Most of the settlers of the district have their patta related documents.

C. They play a role in the district's economy from colonial era specially in agriculture and animal husbandry and its allied like crops, rice, wheat, milk, ghee, butter, meat/mutton, etc.

D. Creation of Kangpokpi segment in 1973 and converted into general seat in the 20 seats for hills ST reserved seat and become its first MLA for three consecutive terms.

E. The state tried to include them in Backward classes in 1950s and 1980s but ultimately in 1990s included only five caste groups of Badi, Damai, Gainay, Kami and Sarki which have descendants since 1947 in Manipur.

Analysis:

Critical engagement with the paper unearths a few thematic pillars and institutional contradictions along with methodological suggestions about Gorkha in Manipur's Kangpokpi as follows:

A. Colonial Spatiality and Fiscal Imperialism

The creation of the KKGRA in 1915–1916 was not just an administrative act of generosity; it was a spatial means of colonial

domination and fiscal extraction. In a process by which a British political agency had grouped dispersed pastoralists within a bounded space, tax collection had become institutionalized in the form of the Foreigners' Tax (in 1897) and the Grazing Tax. The paper reveals an intriguing administrative unevenness: while the Foreigners' Tax was abolished at independence, the Grazing Tax has persisted in Kangpokpi. By contrast, the Gorkhas of neighboring Senapati now pay the same House Tax as the native tribes through local or village chief of the jurisdiction. This divide illustrates how post-colonial state apparatus has selectively retained colonial-era fiscal categories, which in turn reinforcing the Gorkhas' distinct administrative status.

B. The Sedentarization Paradigm and Land Tenure

The de-reservation of the KKGRA (1946) represents a structural transformation from a nomadic, pastoral mode of economy to that of a sedentary, agrarian mode. The transition was consciously engineered by the state to address the escalating ethnic and resource tensions between Gorkha graziers and indigenous hill tribes. With the allocation of paddy land for wet-rice farming and the issuance of formal pattas, the Gorkhas found a foothold on the land. This transition was successful, but it produced a peculiar legal geography: the hill-dwelling Gorkhas in Kangpokpi continue to give land revenue to the valley-based Sekmai Sub-Deputy Collectorate in the unique hill-valley administrative conundrum in Manipur. For instance, the uppermost pattaland of the northern region is upto Kangpokpi since colonial period through under the valley Imphal west and the same was excluded from the hill administration while recognized by the govt in pre-statehood days.

C. Judicial Agency and Post-Colonial Security

Another significant of the settlement is its documentation of Gorkha legal agency during the mid-twentieth century. Following the demographic expansion facilitated by the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty, the state

attempted to reclaim reserved forest land through eviction orders. Rather than submitting to displacement, Gorkha settlers utilized the post-colonial judicial apparatus. Landmark decisions such as CC Revenue Case No. 47 of 1958 and Forest Settlement Officer's combined verification of the settler's claims in 1965 show that Gorkha settlers were able to effectively use documented historical habitation (usually ranging between 40 to 60 years) to gain permanent possession of land. This legal tenacity was also vital in keeping several important Gorkha settlements out of proposed reserved forests. The Gorkha reserved created by British now turn into permanent home with documentation of pattalands which resided most of the villages in Kangpokpi.

D. Institutional Evolution and Political Negotiation

The political shifts of the Kangpokpi Gorkhas reflects an active negotiation for representation. The pattern of change from the traditional village headmen (or the khullakpas) to the Gram Panchayats with the passing of the UP Panchayat Raj Act of 1968, and finally back to the Autonomous District Council (ADC) in 2012, may be taken as a pliant response to altering modes of governance. In addition, the turning of the Kangpokpi Assembly Constituency into an unreserved general seat in 1974 would be taken as a significant consequence of systemic compromise on the part of the state, in recognition of the demographic presence of the Gorkhas and a concession for them to have a direct legislative voice.

E. Geographical Togetherness and Political Divided

Earlier, the northern region was under ersthwhile Senapati district until 2016. Kangpokpi district is created in such a way that a zig-zag is there surrounded three sides of the valley separated the other district of Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul. The Nepalis are divided on assembly segments of Saitu-Kangpokpi. On the west of Kangpokpi, there is an old Tamenglong road, so called IT Road, resided many Nepali villages connecting Irang valley. Some of these villages are under Saitu segment instead of Kangpokpi while some villages are under Kangpokpi block but

under Tadubi segement of Senapati district. This pattern make them further wilderness, one has to pass different district to posses basic documents or records.

Conclusion:

The historical trajectory to adapt, integrate, and survive and now legal agency and structural resilience of the Gorkhas in Kangpokpi, Manipur is an astonishing narrative. From their beginnings as frontier military laborers and nomadic graziers under colonial rule, the Gorkhas were able to successfully negotiate harsh regional geopolitical contestations, ecological friction, and state-sponsored expulsion efforts to enroot themselves as a settled, politically integrated agrarian population. In a process of active adaptation toward wet-rice production and obtaining formal land tenure through the state's legal system, they converted their status from that of transitory frontier occupants to that of permanent citizens of the soil. The 2/3rd of Nepali population and villages of the state are concentrated in the Northern district of Senapati, now called Kangpokpi, located between Maram and Kanglatongbi created by the modern elements of development in political, cultural and economic conditions of the Nepali people. They are mostly Hindus by religion but there are also some Christian with some converts of those having long connection in the tribal villages and few Buddhists of some Nepali caste group. For example, among the Sherpa group in IT Road, there is only one Buddhist Monastery called Sangdungba Gumba and numerous churches in nearly every large settlement area. Indeed, this is a kind of survival technique with the native population at the places where they made their first homes, by assisting the natives in farming and ranching. Then they lead them into the villages through both direct and indirect connection at a later date to establish themselves.

In a regional terrain once defined by hard ethnic borders and threat of displacement, the Gorkhas of Kangpokpi have hegemonized a peculiar political space. Their involvement in both local hill councils and state

politics and their localized strategies through cultural preservation and selective assimilation reveals that ethnic amalgamation on the frontier is not a passive consequence of migration, but rather a dynamic, near-continuous process of negotiation. Ultimately, their story demonstrates that the Gorkhas within Manipur are not simply marginal figures, but well-entrenched actors who have permanently shaped the agrarian economy, political configuration and socio-cultural composition of Manipur's northern hills. In a state where political legitimacy is completely integrable with 'indegenous' tribal status or valley hegemony, the Gorkhas are rigorously labelled as 'outsiders'. Over the past ten years, a large number of Nepali families have been displaced/outflux from numerous Nepali villages of Irang, Reserved areas and Saikul areas situated at the belly of the hills and margins of the district and they are now moving to concentrated areas of Kanglatongbi-Charhazare and Kalapahar over ethnic conflict and security leaving the population as ghost voters in reality.

The Gorkha experience in Manipur laid bare a glaring geopolitics-there was no anymore place for a neutral buffer in between rigid, militarised ethnic enclaves. On the long-standing ethnic conflicts in Manipur, victims like Meitei-Pangal and Nepali are caught in the middle and become the soft target of the warring groups which as of now have no buffer zones but often target over suspicious. By narrating the history, demographic, and land status of particular villages (Irang, Toribari, Charhazare, Kalapahar, Maohing), the paper moves the Gorkha narrative beyond vague, generalized generalisations and situates it in specific geographic realities.

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