INNER LINE PERMIT IN MANIPUR: AN UNRESOLVED DEMAND

Wairokpam Silvia Devi¹, Jyoti² and Dr. P. Durga Rao³

Wairokpam Silvia Devi¹
Graduate Student
School of Humanities, Lovely Professional University
Phagwara, Punjab, India.

Jyoti²
Assistant Professor Sociology
School of Humanities, Lovely Professional University
Phagwara, Punjab, India.

Dr. P. Durga Rao³
Associate Professor Sociology
School of Humanities, Lovely Professional University
Phagwara, Punjab, India.

ABSTRACT
Manipur was a princely State and was never under the rule of the British and also had its own system of permits which was later abolished in 1951. The abolishment of the permit resulted in the influx of outsiders in Manipur resulting in increased population, posing threat to the ancestral land, cultures, language, scripts and local dialects of the region. There are constitutional challenges to implementing the Inner Line Permit system in Manipur since Manipur is not officially a tribal State. The Inner Line Permit has been demanded only by the Meitei community while other communities like Kukis and Nagas are not in favour of Inner Line Permit. The content analysis was made on the basis of secondary data and key informants were interviewed to elicit the situation of Inner Line Permit in Manipur. Therefore, there is a need for implementation of Inner Permit Line in the State of Manipur to have peace and prosperity in that region.

Keywords: Assembly, Bill, Dialects, Government, Land reforms, Local, Minority, Meitei, Tribals.

INTRODUCTION
Inner line permit is an official travel document which has been issued by the Government of India in order to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period of time. Inner line permit (ILP) was originally a British era document under an act called as Bengal Frontier Provision Act, 1873 to safeguard their commercial interest, particularly in oil and tea, prohibiting British subjects from entering the protected areas, which then was adopted in India since 1950 to protect the indigenous people and cultures in North-Eastern India. This document has been regulated in three of the North-Eastern States, MiNA (Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh). Under the ILP system, a certificate is issued to outsiders only for travel in the areas covered by ILP. A non-resident cannot buy property in these areas however, long term residence is allowed under certain Clauses of ILP, though they are not allowed for central government employees and security forces.

Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh were under the British rule and the ILP was then implemented by the British, however, 90% of the area of Manipur is located in hills, the question of implementing Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1973 did not arise since Manipur was a princely State and was never under the rule of the British and also had its own system of permits which was later abolished in 1951. The abolishment of the permit resulted in the influx of outsiders in Manipur resulting in increased population, posing threat to the ancestral land, cultures, language, scripts and local dialects of the region. In 2012,
Manipur State assembly passed a resolution urging the Government of India to implement the ILP system in Manipur. However it was denied, since Manipur which attained Statehood in 1972 is not officially a tribal state, and so there are constitutional challenges to implementing the ILP system. In 2015, the State passed the “Manipur Regulation of Visitors, Tenants, and Migrant Workers Bill 2015”, which was later withdrawn since the Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System (JCIILPS) who felt that the bill failed to protect the interests of the indigenous people.
The demand for this ILP still continues and is done by the majority of the Meitei community, and that the issue has become divisive and in some instances has even taken a communal tone. The agitation gained momentum after a student from Grade-XI, demanding the implementation of the ILP system was killed when teargas was used by police to disperse protesters.

The studies on Inner Line Permit (ILP), Ibu Sanjeeb Garg (2016) has stated that the Inner Line Permit (ILP) has been seen both as a security measure as well as an effort to conserve the ethno-social demographics of certain societies. The number of ethnic groups, with major groups being the Meiteis who occupy 10% of the total land area with 60% of the total population, the Meitei-Pangal (Muslims), Nagas, Zomis, Kuki and other smaller groups form 40% of the total population occupying 90% of the total land area. The present struggle for ILP is centered on the Imphal valley dominated by the Meiteis. ILP is seen as a last resort against the onslaught from outsiders who are taking over the traditional land and livelihoods of Meitei. Basically the tribes have been non supportive to the issue of ILP because of the conflict of greater Nagalism or the unification of all the Naga-inhabited areas. Even the kukis, refuse to be drawn into this struggle with their sights on their own battle for an independent kuki homeland. So in such environment the Meiteis feared of being outnumbered in their own lands. It indicates that the demand is not only about the entry rights alone but also about the granting of Scheduled Tribes status to the Meiteis who basically belonged to the general category, which is seen as a guarantee against “invaders” from outside. However, granting of this status to the Meiteis would bring its own fault lines as there is trust deficit between Meitei and Nagas and between Meitei and Kuki. It emphasizes that the ILP cannot be a solution to these issues where at the root of the demand lies the question of identity, of a homeland which is squarely dependent on the territory and it is not about administration alone but also about the requirement of deeper engagement with all the stakeholders as sometimes their idea of historical homeland overlaps with the idea of the historical homeland of someone else, and in the end it is the Meitei society that has to play the larger part. Regarding the fractious demand for ILP in Manipur, Nehginpao Kipgen (2015), mentioned about the agitation gaining momentum after a student in Grade-XI from Ananda Singh Higher Secondary Academy was killed while demanding the implementation of the ILP system. There are constitutional challenges to implementing the ILP system since Manipur is not officially a tribal state. The ILP has been demanded only by the Meitei community while other communities like Kukis and Nagas are not in favour of ILP. The Kukis feel that the Meitei community would take an advantage of their stand of Kukis being outsiders even though they are an indigenous people of Manipur. The Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) signed a peace accord in the presence of Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. There is a serious concern that Naga-dominated areas within Manipur will be integrated with Nagaland. It is suggested that the government to implement the Schedule VI in the hilly areas and the Kuki and Nagas would be allowed to enjoy their autonomy in their respective areas as per this agreement but they should remain within the State of Manipur.

Deepak Naorem (2015) discussed about a contested line- Inner Line Permit in Manipur. It envisages the demand being based on real or imagined fears that Manipur, like Sikkim and Tripura, would be overwhelmed by the ‘outsiders’ and that the ‘indigenous people’ of Manipur would become a minority in their homeland. After the Inner Line Permit gained momentum in Manipur, the legislature was forced to introduce three Bills in the Manipur State Legislative Assembly on August 28, 2015 ensuring the implementation of Inner Line Permit in this State. However, this in turn created another wave of violence among the tribals and tribal organizations opposing these three Bills. The State of Manipur is said to be questioned with structural problems which include ethnic tensions, demographic pressure and the widespread prevalence of corruption and that the solution for Manipur definitely lies in constitutional protection, which must take the form of rights to land and property as granted in other States and not necessarily in the form of ILP. When Churachand Singh was installed as the Maharaja of Manipur in 1907, a document called ‘Rules for the Management of Manipur State’ was framed by the Judicial Department of Eastern Bengal and Assam in April, 1907. The document stated that the political agent were responsible for administrating the hills. By this the administration of the valley were done by the Manipur State Durbar and
for hills it was by the Political agent which represented the British paramount. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the present scenario of Manipur and the need of Inner Line Permit system in Manipur.

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to understand the scenario of ILP in Manipur, content analysis is made on the basis of secondary data from the newspapers, journals, books and reports of different organizations formed in Manipur. And key informants were interviewed to elicit the information about the issue of ILP in Manipur State.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES LEADING TO THE DEMAND OF ILP SYSTEM**

Manipur is already having an inner line permit system known as “Permit System” even before the merging agreement with the Indian Union 1949, issued by the Manipur Durbar for the migrant workers entering the geographical boundaries of Manipur. This Permit System was implemented in Manipur during the Maharaja’s time from 1901 to 1950 to control the entry of non-Manipuris from outside the State. This permit ensured identification, detection, registration, and control of illegal immigration in Manipur and also formed an important item of revenue for the State. On January 17, 1948 the Government of India had officially approved retention of the permit system in Manipur. However, on November 18, 1950, this permit system was abolished by Mr. Himmat Singh, the then Chief Commissioner of Manipur, without the approval of the Government of India, allowing free entry, unchecked and uncontrolled influx of outsiders from other States leading to unprecedented increase of migrant population in Manipur. The massive influx of outside migrants has posed a threat to the Manipuri identity and culture of the indigenous Manipuris and had deprived the locals of their ancestral land, food, employment, education, language and scripts and also reservation quota for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

**RESOLUTION TO IMPLEMENT ILP SYSTEM IN MANIPUR**

The demand for ILP has been started since decades ago. It was first initiated by the All Manipur Student Union (AMSU), an organization established in the people’s uprising artificial famine, 1965, by carrying out stirs to send back the outsiders (Non-Manipuris) to their respective States in the year 1980. Memorandum was submitted to the Manipur State Government for the introduction of Inner Line Permit on June 30, 2006, however, the Government of Manipur was silent about it. Later in 2012, people settled in and around Imphal valley enforced demand for the implementation of ILP by carrying out general strikes and agitation, which then made the Manipur State Assembly to pass a resolution urging the Government of India to implement the ILP system in Manipur on July 13, 2012. However, there was no positive response from the Government of India. On March 16, 2015, the Manipur State Legislative Assembly introduced the “Manipur Regulation of Visitors, Tenants, and Migrant Workers Bill, 2015”. The Bill proposed to list all visitors, tenants and migrant workers with the Directorate of Regulation of Visitors and Tenants, which is set up under the proposed act and State Labor Department. However, the bill was later withdrawn on July 15 after it earned the wrath of the Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System (JCILPS), an organization formed by the collaboration of civil organizations on July 4, 2012, which felt that the Bill failed to safeguard the interests of the indigenous people. The argument put forth by the JCILPS is that since Manipur can no longer protect its indigenous culture and distinctiveness after the 1949 merger, the ILP system must be put in place. From Mid of June 2015, mass movement headed by the JCILPS involving students and women started demanding the implementation of ILP which lasted for three months. Later the State Assembly passed three bills on August 31, 2015 for the protection of indigenous people of Manipur. The three Bills are: (1). The Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015. (2). The Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (seventh amendment) Bill, 2015. (3). The Manipur Shops and Establishments (second amendment) Bill, 2015. But, these Bills were strongly opposed by the indigenous hilly people of the State, and it failed to be passed and implemented.

**CAUSE FOR THE DEMAND**

The central cause for the demand of ILP is the free entry of ‘outsiders’ both from inside and outside the Indian States. The natives believe that the absence of a permit system can make indigenous communities in Manipur a minority both culturally and demographically. Such as in the case of Tripura, the indigenous people, the Tripuris have been marginalized ever since illegal migrants flooded the State, depriving them of their constitutional rights. This is the reason for not implementing ILP in the region and so similarly if ILP is not implemented in Manipur to protect the indigenous people of the State, this will result for the indigenous people to become minorities which affect the culture and tradition of this indigenous people. After the independence and subsequent accession of Manipur to India in the year 1949, the influx of foreigners and
other Indians into Manipur has increased exponentially. Illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal has gone up for the past few years. This has led to increased competition for the employment opportunities among others. Local youth have to compete with outsiders for jobs and moreover outsiders are ready to work for lower wages. To protect the indigenous people and culture, there is a need for a system which should come under the Indian Constitution to ensure the safety of the natives of Manipur.

**NEED OF INNER LINE PERMIT IN MANIPUR**

Inner Line Permit System is found to be the only solution that would ensure the protection of indigenous society from becoming a minority. Manipur indeed has a reason for demanding ILP, as during the Maharaja's rule Manipur already had its own permit system for the immigrant workers and outsiders during 1905 to 1950 which was also permitted by the Government of India after the annexation of Manipur into the Indian Union in the year 1949. However, this system was abolished by Mr. Himmat Singh, the then Chief Commissioner of Manipur, without the approval of the Indian Government.

Manipur has a geographical area of 22,327 sq km, in which 20,089 sq km of area is covered by a chain of hills and the remaining area covering only 2,236 sq km is the small valley and that it faces similar problems of immigration as that of MiNA which is in same geographical area. According to K. H. Ratan, former Convener of the Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System (JCLIPS), the population of Manipur in 2011 was 28 lakh, out of this only 17 lakh (1.7 million) were indigenous people and 10 lakh (1 million) were outsiders. The population of the immigrant businessmen and workers had been tremendously increased thus creating a demographic imbalance in the State, thus threatening the population of the indigenous communities. The continuous influx of outsiders has created fear among the locals. The outsiders are buying lands and property and starting businesses and are ready to work for lower wages, this makes difficult for the local Manipuri tribals to get any employment, depriving the indigenous communities of their land and food and due to the increased population, lack of food are main problems in the State, resulting in importing of foods like rice from outside the state. Outsiders bring their languages and culture which poses threat to the native language, scripts, and local dialects. Land in tribal belts and blocks are being occupied by non-tribals and Bangladeshis since the monitoring mechanism fails to protect these lands from the encroachers.

The validity of the demand is that ILP does not prohibit outsiders from entering the State and that it merely requires them to get registered for identity. Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India thereof having a distinct language, script, or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same and that the demand is therefore constitutional and legal.

**OTHER SIDE OF THE DEMAND**

The demand for the implementation of Inner Line Permit System is done by majority of the Meitei community ever since the beginning. Manipur consists of three communities and they are Meitei, Meitei-Pangal and Tribals. Under tribals there are Kukis and Nagas. Majority of the tribals are not supportive of the demand and there is a special provision for Manipur under Article 371C of the Indian Constitution for the hilly areas committee that forbids non-tribal people from within as well as outside the State from buying and owning land in the tribal or hilly areas in Manipur, and another reason for not supporting is because they are unaware of the details and its implication for them. Many within the Kuki community do not support the ILP because there are some who fear that the Meiteis could use the ILP to advance their stand of Kukis being outsiders. They feel that the demand for ILP is a Meitei issue. And that none of the drafting members in the committee set up the Manipur Government to draft a new ILP bill were tribal.

In the Hill Areas the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (MLR & LR) Act 1960 does not apply, however, the Manipur Government has taken almost 200 tribal villages from the cover of hill areas and applied the MLR & LR Act through official notifications. Most of the hilly people do not have official papers to prove their identity and ownership of their land. The first Meitei-tribal clash broke out in 2015 during the mass movement spearheaded by JCLIPS demanding implementation of ILP, failing to consult all the section of indigenous communities before starting the demand. This movement led to passing of three Bills, among them, Protection of Manipur People Bill, 2015 set 1951 year as a cut off year for criteria to be a citizen of Manipur and if the bill is set into law then many indigenous people of Manipur both from valley and hill will be pull out from citizenship. On the other hand, outsiders have chances to be included in indigenous people of Manipur who have settled before 1951. But Non-Manipuris can never be included into indigenous people and will remain as outsiders. This is the reason why the tribal communities opposed these Bills. The demand have filled tensions and fear to the tribals and the 2015 movement have totally threatened...
communal peace and promoted communal conflicts and trust deficit. This is the major reason for tribals not to support the implementation of the demand.

DENIAL OF THE DEMAND
Manipur is one of the North-Eastern States of India, and it is also one among the States including Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh which demanded for the implementation of ILP and it is implemented in these three States and the reason for their implementation is that these States are all a tribal State, however Manipur is still demanding for the implementation of ILP. Some of the reasons for the denial of the demand were that, even after the merging of Manipur to the Indian Union in 1949, Manipur has not been officially a tribal State and that ILP is a document which is issued only in the tribal States of India and that Manipur is being divided into general and scheduled tribes, where generals are the Meitei community. However, Manipur got the general status only after merging with India but it was an independent tribal State. Another reason given for the denial by the government is that since North-Eastern States lack labours and trained professionals, ILP permit will be a setback for the underdeveloped region and that it is not necessarily needed in Manipur as it is not considered a minority State. For the migration problem, is said to be an issue for all regions in the country which is unavoidable and that the problem of illegal migrants can be handled easily by increasing the border security, therefore, ILP is not necessary.

PRESENT SCENARIO OF ILP IN MANIPUR
The uncontrolled and unchecked immigration is creating tensions and conflicts not only between the immigrants and the natives but also among various ethnic groups of the natives. The demand for ILP permit still continues, doing strikes and agitation against the Government of Manipur. There have been conflicts between the public and the government regarding the implementation of ILP. A major incident which occurred during the agitation and which led to the agitation gaining momentum was the death of a Grade 11 student named Robinhood, who was killed while demanding the implementation of ILP system when police used teargas to disperse the protesters. The demand caused severe effects to the society, many people were killed and some were left injured, including students and women. It has been a major distraction for the students in their education. Frequent strikes disturbed the normal life of the people, causing problems for the employers and for the daily wages.

Political parties have come to support the implementation of ILP. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also come forward to join the cause. Earlier BJP had opposed the operation of the ILP in Manipur, including Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. Manipur Pradesh President had submitted a memorandum to the Governor, seeking the implementation of ILP. However, there is no change in the agitation and no positive response from the Government of India.

CONCLUSION
The State Government is not able to decide anything or pass the demand to the Government of India since there is no positive response from the central government and still waiting for the approval of the central government. For the proposed legislation to become a law and if the hill areas are to be within its ambit, it will require the consent of the Hill Area Committee. The demand for ILP in Manipur is not for valley area alone but it is also for the whole of Manipur because the impacts due to influx of outsiders equally affect the entire areas of Manipur. Therefore, it is necessary for all the indigenous communities to come together in support of the implementation of ILP in the Manipur State. However, it is observed that the ILP implementation is not supported by the hill people since its beginning. To stop the trust deficit among the communities and to bring about a mutual understanding, people’s awareness and consultation is required to get support from all the section of the indigenous communities before the demand is made. Various organizations like JCILPS spearheaded the mass movement in 2015, failing to consult all the section of the indigenous communities beforehand. This is the reason for some communities not to support the implementation of ILP as if they are not aware of the impact of outsiders. The demand needs collective support otherwise there will be no peaceful co-existence among the indigenous communities of the State. Therefore, there is a need for intervention by the Government of India to resolve the issue of Inner Line Permit in the State of Manipur to make this State peace, productive and prospective.

REFERENCES
Nehginpao Kipgen, 27 August 2015, The Hindu: The fractious demand for ILP in Manipur.

Pranav Joshi, 19 August 2015: All you need to know about the Inner Line Permit issue in Manipur.

Thangkhanlal Ngaihte, 01 September 2015: The Inner Line Permit System in Manipur will cause more trouble in Manipur, not less.

Thangkhanlal Ngaihte, 21 September 2015, *The Indian Express*: Manipur: Decoding the rift between the Meiteis and the hill tribes.