

Intercultural business communication and Culture Identity: a case study of Manipur

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Abstract

The state of Manipur is situated in the easternmost corner of northeast India. It is a multi-ethnic state with a population, according to the 2011 census, being 28,55794 and in its land area covering 22,327 square kilometres. The geographical structure of the state can be divided into two regions, namely, the valley and the hills. Out of the total population of the state, 58.9% represent the valley population, and 41.1% represents the hills population. The hills areas are inhabited mainly by various tribes. There are 33 recognized tribal communities that inhabited the hill areas of Manipur, which either fall under the Nagas or the Kukis, the two conglomerates of Manipur tribal. Moreover, the valley is mainly inhabited by the Meitei. Intercultural business communication has been taking place in this multicultural state of Manipur since ancient time. The purpose of this article is to look at how, in this age of globalisation, intercultural business communication poses a threat to the cultural identity of the state's smaller communities. The paper's expected outcome is to determine how cultural identity can be preserved in the context of intercultural exchange among the state's many populations in this age of globalisation and the digital revolution. The paper will be illustrated by a case study taking the three major communities of the state, i.e. the Meitei, the Nagas and the Kukis. It would further examine through empirical research and evaluated by a field study in one of the most culturally diverse state of Manipur, India. However, it is not intended to present new empirical findings.

Keywords: Manipur, intercultural business communication, multicultural, culture identity, globalisation.

1.0. Introduction

Manipur is geographically situated in the Indian Subcontinent's eastern corridor, sharing an international border with Myanmar (formerly Burma) on the east and Indian states such as Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam on the west, with a total area of around 22,327 square kilometres (Singh,1992). As the state is divided into two regions, on account of the geographical settings, the state's population was made up of hill tribes, predominantly Nagas and Kukis, and plains people, known as Meetei (Hudson, 2014). The state has a population of almost 3 million, constituted by different tribes and communities, most prominently of the above-mentioned communities besides many others. Endowed with bounteous natural resources and beautiful cultural landscapes, initially, the community's life revolves around agricultural practices, particularly jhum cultivations, handicrafts, pottery and handlooms, as such, resulting in inter-community business communication within the state. Of late, with the globalization and liberalization, the people of the state also have begun to tourism business start-up in the states coping up with the rest of the world, posing a threat to its cultural identities and values. This has accelerated the growing pace of business transaction between inter-communities in the state of Manipur. It can be said that the intercommunity business and trade have been in practice before India's independence. In fact, there was a long tradition of well established trade/business communication among the various communities stocks within the state as well as with its neighbouring countries as early as 7th century A.D (Suan, 2016). The occurrence of World war-I and II, coupled with some of the tribesmen being employed in Labor Corps by the British Raj in various parts of Europe during the Wars returned home with new ideas which enabled them to think for their future prospects. The setting in the 20th century saw a massive change among the tribal populace of the state in the spheres of trade, literacy etc. which consequently led to the popularization of the print cultures that radically transformed their mindset towards self-understanding (Suan, 2016:405). This was the time around that saw the development of trade among the various ethnics of Manipur. The state is said to have the highest concentration of

handicrafts units generating the highest number of employees, both skilled and semi-skilled labours in the entire North-Eastern states of India.

The advent of the British in Manipur brought a tremendous change in Inter-community life, most notably, the trade practices between the people of hills and valleys with better transportation facilities. For all the right reasons, deservedly so, Manipur is described as the "Jewel of India" for its uniqueness by the country's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

1.1. Literature review

Extensive study has been done on pluralistic transactions/dealings and cultural identification. Mention maybe be made of some imminent personalities whose contributions have impacted masses, viz, Jayant Singh, (2007) in his edited book, "Globalization and the changing scenario of Cultural Interaction (Manipur Experience)" explores how Manipur has been experiencing various forms of cultural interactions since ages. He asserted that waves of migrants came and passes through this state in different phases of times. In the process, the state experienced the assimilation and acculturation from the people of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Asia. Subsequently, there were assimilation and acculturation of the Aryan culture, Tai culture, and mongoloid culture and so on. He discussed about the new development that have taken place with the arrival of the British into the state and the subsequent post-Independence era that dramatically changed the landscapes of the state in the spheres of cultural interaction, establishment of industries, commercialization of agriculture, expansion in transport and communication etc.

Meitei, in his introduction of the book 'the Cultural Heritage of Manipur' describes Manipur as the homeland of many ethnic groups arrived from the east and the west. He observed that each ethnic group whether big or small are preserving and protecting their rich heritage against the strong waves of colonialism, liberalization and globalization. These heritage, he says, are the identity markers of each community. At the same time he also affirmed that there is a unique cultural synthesis of the east and the west in the state that took place since time immemorial. Many academics have indicated the 7th century as the time period for migrations of many

ethnicities into the current state of Manipur, therefore the term "immemorial" that he used in his work seems irrelevant to me in this context.

Gilbert Gangne in his book "The Trade and Culture Debate, Evidence from US Trade Agreement" shed a good deal of light on United State as the forerunner of cultural diversity in its trade globalization and liberalization. While countries like France and Canada worry much about the effects of economic globalization and the digital revolution getting contamination with their cultural identity and cultural items. These conflicting views and interest between different states on cultural identity in the course of trade have been debated in his book. He argued that digital and electronic trade narrowed the policy and management of traditional cultural sectors.

Patricia, in her article, discussed about various trade agreement in the world arena, mostly on conflicting views of different countries about trade and culture policy. She has taken the case of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2017 and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which discussed preserving cultural identity without affecting economic liberalization. She remarked that much of our lives circle around culture but not economic activity.

Rao and Thombre, in their "Intercultural communication: The Indian Context", beautifully crafted the intercultural communication in the Indian context where the society is marked by multiculturalism. They deal with the challenges as well as the opportunities of having a diverse culture in India. They also discussed the different means of communication, which broadly divided into verbal and non-verbal. It covers different aspects of intercultural communication such as its history, orientation of culture, formation of intercultural identity, intercultural/cultural conflicts etc.

North-East India, as depicted by Dikshit and Dikshit, is a mosaic of natural and cultural landscapes with unrivalled diversity and human connection through numerous forms. They further throw light on various indigenous population inhabiting contrasting environment and speaking a variety of regional and local dialects. It brought the reader to familiarize with the spatial distribution, lifestyle and culture of the indigenous people of each state of the region, giving emphasis to the unique features of each tribe. They also provide an account of the

economy of the region, stating that the people depended on primitive farming, cottage industries, craft and handloom, silkworm rearing etc.

In 'Linguistic Pragmatics of Intercultural Professional and Business Communication' Malyuga and Orlova, opined that "a person's cultural identity and national clearly affects the intercultural business transaction, taking into account language as one of the important cultural identities that affects the efficiency of the intercultural communication". They went on to say that, while language is one of the parts of cultural identity that influences intercultural business interactions, it encompasses a wide range of frameworks, including religion, society, ethnicity, and education. They did not, however, address the behavioural factor, which has a significant impact on the efficiency of intercultural business communication.

Most intercultural business communication researchers, according to Melanie, believe that business statements exclusively deal with truth and logical matter, making them objective in nature. This, for Melanie is amiss. However, she asserted that Intercultural business communication, like any other interpersonal communication, requires human reaction and emotion. In her book 'The Quintessence of Intercultural Business Communication', she focused on cultural elements and human behaviour that are firmly ingrained in any culture group and must be considered when dealing with intercultural business communication in order to be successful.

Curtin maintained that trade and exchange across cultural lines is part and partial of human history. He traced the history of cross-cultural trade all the way back to the dawn of civilization. In his book "Cross-Cultural Trade in World History," he confirms this. He stated that cross-cultural trade in most of the cases was carried out through institutional arrangement for the reason he explained; people living different lifestyles are strangers by definition. Even if a second dialect has been developed between the two parties, it is difficult to trust them in the same way that we trust our own kinfolk. He also claimed that, aside from military conquest, the cross-cultural exchange is one of the most important triggers for change.

According to Mooij, culture has an impact on consumer behaviour. He gathered historical data on consumer behaviour and decisions in order to analyse and assess this. He underscored the importance of history by stating that consumer habits and behaviour from the past can be used to explain current and future consumer behaviour. Because behaviour is one of the essential characteristics that are inherent in a given culture, he finds that behaviour that appears fresh is often a new format of old behaviour.

1.2. Objectives

- 1.To get a sense of the state's varied cultural identities.
2. To see the changes in business communication that occurred following the arrival of the British.
3. Examine the effects of globalisation on the state's cultural identities.

1.3. Significance of the study

In this fast-changing world of economic globalization and liberalization coupled with the digital revolution already set in, it is important to study the influence of the major community over the smaller communities in the Manipur society. This study may be useful in future planning about the cultural policies at the national level in such a way that those cultural products can be excluded from the purview of the business-related agreement. Gone are the days when people bought books, magazines, newspapers and records audio etc. Nowadays, with the latest development of wireless technology and the internet, people not only can listen to music or watch audiovisual materials, but it enables them to read magazines, newspapers or articles etc., virtually anywhere from personal electronics gadgets such as laptops, mobile and so on. In fact, this so-called digital revolution dramatically expands the capacities to deliver one's cultural contents through different media (Gagne 1992:40-41). Therefore, it is important to understand that this role or influences on one's culture will be useful in generating awareness among people of different cultural background to uphold our cultural identity.

1.4. Theoretical orientation and methodology

The theoretical framework for the paper is drawn from pragmatic point of view that sees society as a complex set-up working to bring unity and steadiness. This is so apt in the case of Manipur as Joy Kumar Singh in his edited book, “Globalization and the Changing Scenario of Cultural Interaction (Manipur Experience)”, stated that waves of migrants came and passes through this state in different phases of times. He further stated, in the process, the state experienced assimilation and acculturation from the people of South Asia, Southeast Asia and Eastern Asia. Thereby, the state is made up of Aryan culture, Tai culture, mongoloid culture and so on. In the same line Sanjenbam Yaipha Meitei in the introduction of his book ‘The Cultural Heritage of Manipur’, describes the state as the homeland to many ethnic groups that arrived from the East and the West.

Historical mapping is one of the methods employed to understand the different cultural groups living in peculiar landscapes of the state. The method unearths the various cultural groups and the interactions among the various communities in different phases of time. There are other methods, too; for instance, the sociological approach has also been engaged to understand the societal structure of the state. The sources gathered are from historical facts and contemporary. These include published and unpublished books, paper, journals, articles, newspaper clippings etc. The state of Manipur evolved as a distinct entity in many aspects such as political, culture, socio-economic, etc., between Southeast Asia and South Asia. Therefore, the settlement pattern, societal structure and economic activities are greatly determined by the prevailing conditions in its neighbouring states and country.

1.5. Geographical Distribution and Habitat

Manipur, one of the North East's sister states, shares an international border with Myanmar to the east, Nagaland and Mizoram to the north and south, and Assam to the west. The state is divided into two broad regions: hills and valleys. Manipur Hills encompasses 90 per cent of the state's total land area. The oval-shaped Imphal valley is located in the centre. It is approximately 2,000 square kilometres in size and is surrounded by the Blue Mountains at an elevation of 790 metres (2,590 feet) above mean sea level. It is dotted with small mounds that rise above the flat surface. There are sixteen districts in all. There are ten districts on the hill and six districts in the valley. The state has numerous rivers that flow both within and without the state. The state's notable

rivers include the Barak, Imphal, Iril, Irang, Chakpi, Sekmai, Nambul, and Khuga, which all originate in Manipur's hills. Manipur has the world's largest freshwater lake, Loktak Lake, into which the bulk of rivulets in the Manipur plain flow. The Manipur high hills surround the Manipur central plain. Both the hills and the valleys of the state have diverse vegetation and wildlife. Manipur, despite its relative obscurity, has a particular scenic beauty combined with a unique past renowned for its culture and heritage. The majority of seasoned international travellers described it as "a place of mystery and wonder." The state is home to a diverse range of flora and faunas amidst its unique geographical settings. Loktak Lake is one of the largest freshwater stretches in the Indian subcontinent, and the Keibul Lamjao National Park is known for being the world's only floating park and the last natural habitat of the rare "Sangai" dancing deer.

The Meiteis, Nagas, and Kuki are the three main ethnic groups that live in Manipur. The Nagas and Kuki tribal populations, as well as their different sub-tribes, are primarily found in the Hills districts of Chandel, Churachandpur, Kamjong, Kangpokpi, Noney, Pherzawl, Senapati, Tamenglong, Tengenoupal, and Ukhrul. The Meitei people have predominantly settled the valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Jiribam, Thoubal, and Kakching (Hudson, 1968). As a matter of historical facts and economic reasons, as they both practice jhum cultivation, the Nagas and the Kukis settlements were intermingled in the hills while the Meitei mostly confined to the Manipur plain. The people of the hills and the plains have continuous inter-cultural commercial communication. People from the hills descend to the plains to trade their agricultural products and obtain necessities that they could not get in the highlands. There is cultural interaction among these communities in the state as a result of this process, and Meitei, as the dominant community, has an advantage in influencing the hills tribes in many cultural elements. With the passage of time, hill tribals began to migrate to the plain in quest of greater economic possibilities. The Kukis are recognised for their ability to migrate from one location to another. In relation to this, one Kuki once told me, "We are like the birds of the air; we construct our nests here this year, and who knows where we will build next year" (Hudson, 2014: 2). With the passage of time, there have been several instances of hill people migrating to the Manipur plain. There is acculturation by the peoples of the hills as a result of this.

1.6. Transportation and Economy

Manipur's transportation is heavily reliant on the road due to the state's landlocked location. Aviation and railways have their own market share, though the railways are still in their nascent stage. Manipur is primarily reliant on the three National Highways that traverse through the state. The lifelines of Manipur are currently NH-37 (New Cachar Road), NH-39 (Imphal-Kohima Road), and NH-150 (Mizoram-Churachandpur-Jessami Road). The Pan Asian Highway will pass through Manipur from Myanmar as the state is situated in a strategic location. The Union Government's ambitious 'Look East Policy' will benefit Manipur in the race to globalisation. When we look back at historical accounts, we can see how various modes of transportation were. There has not been a clear path for people to communicate with one another. The Maharaja (King) of Manipur, for example, is claimed to have travelled to different regions of his kingdom on elephants, horses, or mules. The high hills and dense vegetation obstructed unrestricted mobility and intercommunity economic transactions (Singh, 1992: 50-51). Historically, this has been a hindrance to inter-community communication. However, from 1891 onwards, there were reports of British inland transportation. According to English ethnographers like McCulloch, Brown, and Hudson, the southern ethnic boundary of the Zeliangrong region was a one-day journey along the Cachar Bridle Path, also known as the Tongjei Maril in Manipur, from the valley. Because of its tiny and precipitous nature, the path is also known as the Bamboo tube line. The Bridle Path was improved by British engineers employing tribal labour in 1838-39, and then upgraded into a fine weather motorable road by Col. Chapman's Pioneers a century later during World War II (Singh 2020). This little path stood silent witness to the changing fortunes of the Manipuri Kings and rulers, the bloody encounters during the Burmese invasions in the 18th and 19th Centuries, and the passage of Colonial military officers whose writings, particularly those of R.B. Pemberton, R. Brown, and James Johnstone, immortalised the path. It was one of the four important trade routes connecting Manipur valley with the rest of India (Kamei 2009). The British expedition in the Manipur hills brought about substantial changes as they built roads to link with the far-flung places from the state capital (Kamei, 1997). Major developments in inland transportation systems were witnessed during the Battle of Imphal, a formidable part of the World War II. The majority of Manipur's hills have been made accessible to free inland traffic to Imphal. Later, the same became a boon to the people of Manipur, allowing them to communicate with one another in both social and economic transactions. As a result, Manipur is well connected. There are inter-district buses that connect

Manipur's capital. Good network system enables the people to interact freely among the inhabitants.

In North East, Manipur has the largest handloom cottage industry. (Pandya, et al. 2010) Agriculture, however, is the people's primary occupation, and it plays a significant role in the state's economy. The state's economy is based mostly on agricultural products, as it is an agrarian state. Agriculture is the largest contributor to the gross domestic product of the state (Aditi, 2020). More than 70% of the state's workforce is employed in agriculture, with diverse crops of various seasons standing in their fields. Major crops such as rice, wheat, maize, lentils, and sugarcane are produced in large quantities. Besides, there are other important crops which include fruits, vegetables, spices, roots and tubers, as well as a variety of sweet-smelling herbs and medicinal plants.

Vocational trade and business transactions between the people of the hills and valleys run parallel to it. Manipur is a newcomer to the tourist industry. The state has worked tirelessly to open up other avenues of income generation and employment to provide alternatives to the state's work force while preserving the rich Manipuri cultural heritage, natural environment, and biodiversity. With the introduction of modern infrastructure to the state, interaction and transaction become increasingly accessible.

1.7. Cultural Identity

The term "culture" refers to the practices that society has consistently followed for a long time. It also refers to a shared characteristic shared by a group of people, such as their belief system, mode of communication, food habits, social, behavioural norms and standards of behaviour, lifestyle, literature, and music. Some cultures' popularity may be based on a large number of followers, whereas others may be practised by a smaller number of people. Nonetheless, the extent of a culture's values, customs, belief system, or origin cannot be measured. All civilizations, no matter how large or tiny, may teach us about numerous traditional traditions about ourselves, others, and the global society at large. One's culture determines one's identity.

A person's identity is determined by the culture he or she adheres to, as well as how they interact with others. It can be defined as the sum total of their lifestyle, which is followed by a large

number of people and passed down in various forms from one generation to the next. People of various origins, ethnic groups, and cultural groups all have their own traditional value systems, beliefs, and ways of life. We identify them based on the clothes they wear, their eating habits, their belief system, moral and social values, and how they interact and deal with one another in their daily lives.

In everything we do, similarity binds us. Shared customs, social, and moral values unite the members of a group, providing a sense of belonging and fostering a sense of brotherhood. The medium of communication is important, and culture is inextricably linked to the language spoken by people who share the same cultural identity. People's use of a common language fosters feelings of group identity and unity. More importantly, it is one means of preserving and sharing culture and traditions.

How do people identify themselves? Where does one get a sense of belonging? The spoken language and common cultural practices come to the fore. The feeling of common culture may be strong or weak, depending upon their society and their cultural background. Some will be proud of its unique customs, traditions and various cultural practices. Scholars held various perspectives on cultural identification. Some believe it has a three-stage process, while others believe it simply has many identifying characteristics. Many factors, including family and social institutions and situations, are said to influence cultural identity. However, many are of the opinion that communication accommodation theory, ethnography of speaking, and speech code theory can help them understand the intricacies of cultural identification. Scholars have also looked into the relationship between cultural identity and other factors such as cuisine, acculturation, and kinship (David, 2015).Nyasha Grayman Simpson articulated that the exploration of cultural identity is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, rooted in social-personality psychology, micro-sociology and anthropology(Simpson, 2017).

According to Peter Adler, there are two ways of conceptualising cultural identity. First, it can be used to deduce what the group symbolises and epitomises. This is the most prevalent use of the term. Generally, writes Stephen Bochner, “the cultural identity of a society is defined by its majority group, and this group is usually quite distinguishable from the minority sub-groups with whom they share the physical environment and the territory that they inhabit” (Adler,

2002). Culture is an integral part of any society. Every individual is imbued with culture from birth to death. Everyone has the right to know who they are and where they come from. It is possible only through one's cultural identity.

1.8. Intercommunity relations and cultural practices

In its most basic form, cultural identity can be defined as a sense of belonging to a particular social or cultural group. Manipur has been influenced by cultures of many different ethnic groups who arrived at various points in time and greatly contributed to the growth of civilization. The chronicles and historical texts (Cheitharol Kumbaba) of the Meitei rulers in Manipur have established that Meitei were the original settlers of Manipur. As such, the Nagas and the Kukis are considered as the latecomers. Manipur is popularly known by several names, one of which is 'Poirei Meitei Leipak or Kangleipak,' which refers to the original settlers of Manipur, specifically the Meitei. It is important to remember that different ethnicities in the state belonged to the same stock of race, with the Mongoloid having close cultural and traditional habits affinities. According to the folklore, all of the state's ethnic groups, including the Meitei, descended from the northern cave. There is a division between the valley and the hills only with the arrival of Vaishnavism among the Meitei's, who lived in the valleys, and Christianity among the tribal's who lived in the hills, did a forceful division emerged. However, in the current situation, many hill tribals follow the dominant Meitei communities' customs and practices. For instance, brewing of local wine call 'Yu' and fish consumption are common among all the communities living in the state. There are numerous sections of people among the tribal community who practices what their brethren dwelling in valley do. Some section of the tribal community still believes and practice animism. 'Animism' being the religion practiced widely among the dominant group of Manipur in the past still find relevance among the tribal today.

Language is another aspect of Meitei culture that the hill tribes' people adopted. Many of the tribal people that live in the valley speak Manipuri or Meiteilon among their family members. There have been cases where Meitei community have embraced tribal people's culture and habits; nonetheless, the Meitei's effect on the tribal population is greater. For example, they use scapegoats to heal various illnesses, such as turning chickens free in the woods or slaughtering them, as the Mao Naga and other northern tribes did. The Meitei community's traditional martial

art form is called "Thang-Ta," and the Ta (spear) is primarily a Naga weapon used for hunting, head hunting, though Meitei have developed and are adept at using the weapon, which is an integral part of the martial art form called "Thang-Ta," and they have their own war techniques and skills in using them. Despite having historically acquired identities and cultures, such as food, dress, profession, arts, games, and so on, many tribal communities are concerned about losing their inbred identities and cultural practices as a result of intercultural business communication, intercommunity matrimonial relations, and other factors, all of which are aggravated by globalisation and the digital revolution. There is no denying that the hill race and the dominant Meitei community have a friendly relationship. In the past as well, the people of the hills and the plains shared cordial relations. From time to time, Manipur rulers' expeditions to the hills were a sign of significant bonhomous intercommunity relations. Naturally, the Meitei way of life differs from that of the hills tribesmen in terms of eating habits, crafts, etc. This is not to say that the Nagas and Kukis are the same, as these hill tribesmen uphold and practise the age-old customs, traditions, and practises passed down to them from their forefathers. The community's life of the Meitei, the Nagas and the Kukis can be characterized by their unique traditions and usages they have been closely associated with. Meitei by virtue of the faith they professed are fall into the general category of the constitutional schemes whereas the Nagas and the Kukis are categorised as the Scheduled Tribes in the country, which otherwise allows special grants to uplift the tribal communities. The major difference between the tribal and the Meitei are surface in Constitutional package in the form of Article 371C of the Constitution which allotted special package for hills areas (Hansaria, 2016). In actuality, the practice is to bring the hilly areas up to the same level as the plain areas in all spheres. In other aspects like land holdings systems, kingship or chieftainship, the communities practice differ from each other's. It is evidently clear that the installation of King has been a practice of the Meitei community from the earliest time. All lands belong to the king under these systems. The same was widely practiced by the Kukis living in the Manipur hills. There is slight difference as far as Kuki practice is concerned, they have chieftains in each village who oversee and enjoy massive power, whereas the Nagas do not follow both the practices (Jila, 2017). These various communities each have their own dances, festivals, costumes, food, and so on. Different festivals of different communities marked throughout the year where traditional dances are being performed, traditional cuisines and delicacies are being served, and traditional dresses are being displayed

with great pomp and shows. However, at times Meitei dresses are worn and their dances are performed by the tribal people. The festival of Meitei, 'Ningol Chakouba' where married women are called for feast by their brothers is one unique practice (Kamei 2018). Surprisingly, the Meitei's 'Lai Haraoba' festival, which is associated with giving praise to deity could not be completed without the use of a Rongmei traditional shawl while performing dance and giving thanks to the deity. Indeed, this is the indication of interlink cultures amongst the various communities. Even in the Meitei folklores and the epic of Khamba-Thoibi of Moirang, the relation of Rongmei tribesmen with the Meitei king are found. Intercommunity interaction and cultural exchange has been practiced despite poor inland connectivity from the earliest time. One can see from the Meitei chronicles that there was a close relationship between the Meitei and the Nagas tribe, specifically Rongmei, who lived in the western sector of the state. During the Burmese invasion, the Manipur princess is said to have sought refuge in the hills. There are still artefacts associated with King Garibniwaz's visit to the Tamenglong Hills in the Rongmei Naga area. The intercommunity interactions in Manipur are clear realities. The cultural identity of one's community is valued and upheld across Manipur, from the farthest north to south and east to west.

Rice is a staple food for the Meitei, as well as the state's hill tribes. The hill tribes also consume 'Kabok' (Manipuri term for fried grains of paddy). The 'Meitei's' enjoy fermented fish, known locally as "Ngari" because of its peculiar taste. Fermented fish may now be found in almost every tribal family, which is yet another sign that the mainstream dietary habit has infiltrated into tribal society. Fried fish (nga-thongba), ooti (a type of gravy), chagempomba, singju (a typical fresh vegetable chutney), kangshoi (popular fried curry), and so on are some popular local cuisines. These are the various local terms and food habits of the dominant community, the Meitei, widely adopted and practised by the hill tribes. 'Yongchak' (parkia speciosa, botanical name) 'eromba' chutney are the most popular dishes among the Meitei, along with a few other vegetables and (soibum) fermented bamboo shoot recipes that are today equally popular among tribal populations (Kumar, 2012). The tribesmen from the hills areas of Manipur are traditional farmers, practice jhum cultivations. Rice, yam, tapioca, beans, barley, wheat, chilly, and other foot products are all grown. The Nagas and Kukis are non-vegetarians in general, and in the past, they generally ate solely boil food. The Kukis are famed for their delicacies made with dried meat and yam and rice porridges.

Every community has its own distinct cuisine. To name some, Rongmei community are known for their “sarou tam” (dried meat chutney) and “ganang tamdui” prepared from mustard leaves (Kamei, 2017).

Manipur, a small state in northeast India, is a jumble of ethnic tribes and societies. As a result, studying simply one culture and civilization today is insufficient to appreciate the nuances of Manipuri society, which is interwoven and linked. Although they appear to be similar, they cannot be assumed to be identical in every way (Kumar, 2012). Today, the traditions practised by various Manipur communities raise serious ethical concerns. The advent of modern civilization has adversely affected the culture and traditions of the tribal communities at large, and as a result, the younger generations are not exposed to traditional practices. There should be concerted efforts to promote traditional systems within rural communities.

1.9. Language and intercultural communication

Language plays an important role in bridging the gap among many different communities in Manipur. Language is, without a doubt, one of the most important aspects of cultural identity because it is the medium through which people communicate and remain connected.

It is widely believed that there is a natural link between a community's spoken language and its identity. They identify themselves as members of that group or community by the way they speak and pronounce the words, as well as their speaking pattern. They feel pride, contentment, and a sense of belonging now that they've figured out who they are. As a result, there is a sense of social significance and historical continuity. Globalization causes societal changes and encourages some type of cultural and ethnic identity accommodation (Thadathil, 2008).

There may be common phrases used to mean the same thing or various things when we talk about linguistic relationships, but there cannot be a one-to-one link within human civilization. Although there might be conflict and disagreement between two languages, it is not the same as in human relationships. In reality, language is at the heart of all human relationships, regardless of place, state, or continent. In a multicultural culture, it bridges the gap formed by distinct cultural identities (Owen, 2011).

Manipur is a state with a diverse range of ethnic groups, dialects, religions, and traditions. Manipuri, also known as Meitei Lon, is widely spoken throughout the state, regardless of community affiliation. This is another form of acculturation practiced by hill tribal communities. In fact, it is the only official language of the state called Manipur. Fortunately, Manipuri is one of the languages listed in the Eight Schedule of the constitution of India. Meitei is a name used to describe people of the same ethnic heritage, yet they choose to distinguish themselves socially as Meitei-Pangal or Meitei Muslims, Meitei Christians designating persons who profess Christian faith, and Meitei Hindu, the most populous and dominant community in terms of population. Mention may be made of other languages spoken in the state include Naga and the Kuki-Chin families, as well as Tangkhul, Poumeis, Rongmeis, Thadou, Paite, and others with a sizable population. Among all of these spoken languages and dialects, Meiteilon or Manipuri is the state's primary mode of communication. In a state like Manipur, where there are multiple communities with distinct cultures and traditions, learning the languages and dialects spoken by each of them is an uphill task. In intercommunity commercial engagement and transaction in the state, language serves as a link to connect the various communities. Internal trade was a long-standing economic activity in Manipur. The fact that this trade was primarily handled by women was a distinctive element of this trade in the state, particularly in the valley. Internal trade was primarily conducted by women in the several open bazaars on the hills, just as it was by their valley counterparts. Trade and business within the state increase with better connectivity of transport as compared to the past. The intercommunity business consists of supplying essential food items, forest products, wares and pottery, handicrafts, etc., from valleys to hills and vice versa. For instance, For example, they used to go to villages where items were available to collect in exchange for fish, rice, and other items based on the demand of buyers and sellers. Similarly, some traders took rice, salt, and other essential goods to villages and near lakes (Loktak Lake) and bartered them for fish, water nut, and other items. The Nagas and Kukis used to bring agricultural items such as king chillies, yam, beans, pumpkin, tapioca, cotton, cane and bamboo, and other herbal leaves, etc. from the hills to the valley in exchange for goods such as rice, salt, clothes, and occasionally even Yu (alcohol) and other necessities that were essential to their daily lives. The agricultural products of the hills are transported to the valleys, where there is considerable high demand. Non-agricultural items such as bamboo shoots, seasonal fruits, and dried leaves are frequently transported from the hills to the valley. The Meitei people of the

valley mastered the arts of handloom, weaving, bamboo crafts, implements of iron, bronze, pottery, salt production, and so on, and were in high demand by the hill tribes. Besides, they have also learnt the art of taming and domesticating horse and elephants (Singh, 1998). The valley is fertile and can cultivate and produce a variety of goods; also, the lakes and rivers were historically known for their thriving aquaculture, which they trade with the hills for available local goods. It's worth mentioning the valley's handloom items. Meitei are master weavers who excel in art and handicrafts as well. The oval-shaped valley, which is rich in agricultural produce, is also rich in trade and commerce. Acculturation occurs primarily through business communication and transactions, resulting in the tribal younger generation of the minority ethnic group gradually losing traditional identities. Intermixing with many other groups pollutes one's culture and identity. It is worth noting that despite having been divided by geographical division and considerable social and cultural distinctions, the culture and traditions of the Meitei, the state's social dominating group, have influenced all other ethnic groups of the hill race.

Globalization brought about a new wave of development in the state's trade and business. Tourism, information technology, communication, health and education, infrastructure, and so on are examples of new business opportunities. Manipur has begun to develop its tourism industry. There are a number of scenic areas in both valleys and hills that attract tourists due to natural endowments. This industry is characterised by the ability to disseminate new cultures wherever one goes. The information and technological revolution shapes the futures of intercommunity trade and business in the state.

1.10. Globalization and Culture

The tide of globalisation and the digital revolution gradually swept away inborn cultural norms such as dressing style, eating habits, and speaking style, among many others. The whole community has become one in the twenty-first century, which is also a century of globalisation. In this aspect, western culture appears to be one of the most effective elements in causing behavioural changes and a shift in how people view society. Some societies have lost so much of their culture that their original culture has become so feeble (Libri, 2017). People like to integrate economy and culture in business, too, because the globalisation economy is rising at such a fast pace (Juyuan, 2017:16). In Manipur, for example, the Meitei are the most affluent community in

the state's Imphal valley (capital). Whenever one visits Imphal, one may find many people from diverse groups across the state engaged in the same type of business while following the Meitei community's culture and practises. Many people now believe that if the current trend in Manipur continues, the state's cultural diversity will be lost. The younger generation of the society is more vulnerable to the effects of globalisation, as they are more likely to adopt western culture and the state's dominant group. However, the loss of one's cultural identity as a result of globalisation cannot be the case all of the time, as there are also good consequences. Globalization also allows society to demonstrate its diverse cultural traditions and customs while also learning about other cultures (Libri, 2017). In today's society, it is important to recognise and appreciate distinctions across cultural lines. (Mooij 2019: 16).

In the sphere of business respecting the other culture identity is one of the effective ways to thrive in a cross-cultural business transaction. We all are exceptional in one way or the other, it is high time people give due consideration to the cultures of different people living in different parts of the state. There are undeniably many cultures in the state in which we live, and people should strive to coexist peacefully. Respecting one's own culture as well as the cultures of others entails modifying and adapting in order to live in peace without breaking the multicultural identity's harmonic blend. In today's globalised society, learning to live and let live is the greatest gift one can give to another. Multicultural practises, while not forgetting one's own cultures and traditions and accepting differences, will allow us to evolve and progress (Juyuan, 2017:15).

1.11. Business Communication

Humans are born with the ability to communicate (both verbal and non-verbal). We conduct business across cultural lines, which is a form of communication. Non-verbal communication might be as simple as exchanging items. Furthermore, it is via business communication that we may showcase our own culture while also learning about others (Mero, 2015).

We communicate from the moment we enter this earth. We cry as babies as our first form of communication, literally announcing our arrival to the world. Moreover, if we did not weep, we were purposefully spanked on the bottom to make us cry. 'Cry and communicate to the world or else you will die,' as Rao correctly stated, implying that we must communicate in order to survive (Rao, 2013:19-20). Communication gives meaning to a person's existence, and it also

gives meaning to their environment and surroundings. Without communication, life is somehow incomplete. We communicate with individuals for a variety of reasons: to obtain information, to meet personal needs, to develop a personal identity, and so on (Rao & et, al, 2013). Perhaps verbal communication is also an aspect of business communication. As a result, both verbal and non-verbal communications are used in business (Michniuk, 2008). 'Business communication,' according to Moll, is "participating in communication in an effort to enhance business scope, among individuals, or organisations." Businessmen are marketing items across cultural lines, and in certain cases, partnerships are created with people from various cultures literally to accomplish their mission of sell out their products. When a partnership is not created, however, communication issues arise, resulting in loss of business (Ishola). Cultural identity should be taken seriously in business communication, especially in an intercultural setting, because cultural identity is very important when communicating with people from other cultures.(Juyuan 2017:14).

Concluding observation

Based on the information presented above, one can observe that Manipur has distinct characteristics, including natural heritage, people, cultures, and traditions. Intercommunity relations and interaction have existed since ancient times and continue to do so in the face of globalisation. It is clear from the preceding discussion of the influence of dominant, Meitei culture on the state's minority ethnics while engaging in various business activities. Cultures include languages, way of life, food habits, dress, etc., which act as the flag of one's identity. The fast-changing society such as ours needs to give importance to cultures lest they may become extinct in the heat of rapid globalisation. It is clear that culture has played an important role in creating friendly relationships among the various ethnic groups of the state, both socially and economically, from the past to the present.

There is every possibility of revamping the cultural and linguistic landscape due to globalization which is happening at a faster pace. Furthermore, there exists a new challenge of evolving new multicultural and multilingual communities on the part of the participants. Self-identification through culture building may bring about a paradigm shift in identifying cultural identities in a whole new socio-cultural environment. Maintaining cultural distinctions and solidifying the

lingua franca's foundation remains critical. Because lingua franca is the only way to acknowledge and give voice to all participants in this globalised society, allowing for the existence and coexistence of all communities. There is no such thing as a trade pact or a business agreement between communities inside a state when it comes to intercultural business, although it may exist at the individual level. The mission of cultural defenders such as local organisations and non-governmental organisations has been severely disrupted by the advent of new communication technology. It also transformed people's consumption habit and relationships. With the expansion of electronic trade or e-commerce, intercultural business models have also been affected. In short, with this globalization and liberalization, nothing is it was like before. With regards to this, Gilbert Gagne rightly pointed out, 'with the progressing in the field of digital technologies, the realm of culture identity became free from protectionism'.

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