



Violence, displacement and subjectivity: A study of internal displacement from Sunulok Village after the 1993 communal violence between the Meiteis and the Pangals of Manipur

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Abstract

The violence of early May 1993 between the Meiteis and Pangals of Manipur led to loss of lives and properties, besides internal displacement, and spatial rearrangement. The cold response from the state and civil societies add to a long-term transmission of trauma and transformation in the boundary relations between the two communities. Taking internal displacement as the entry point of enquiry, this paper analyzes the narrative of everyday engagements and boundary relations between people who are separated by displacements; by critically analyzing the nature of engagements through contemporary discourses of identity construction and redefinition. The paper explores the micro narratives of everyday boundary relations and problematizes the ordinary as the site of production and circulation of subjectivity. This paper contends that the ordinary is a complex set of contrasting subjectivities that indicates a differential power dynamic. Processes of displacement and spatial rearrangement, subjectivation, rise of new subjectivities and redefinition of one's identity and their contribution in forging new boundaries between the two communities are discussed.

Keywords: Collective Violence, Community Boundary, Internal Displacement, Subjectivity

Introduction

In the last four decades in Manipur, there have been unprecedented sprouts of ethnic violence between various communities settled in the state. Driven by variety of factors, the animosity between the various communities seems to be firmly rooted. One peculiar feature of the continuing trend is the implicit nature of taking a communal turn. Apart from the violence among the hill tribes, there has been a deep sense of animosity among the people of the hills and the valley regions. However, the most peculiar feature of this violence is that of the increasing violence and confrontation among the two major ethnic communities of the valley area, the Meiteis and the Muslims (Pangals or Meitei-Pangals)^[1]. In complete contrast to the long history of peaceful co-existence between these communities, recent decades have been dotted by an unprecedented surge in violent confrontations leading to a gradual decay of social cohesion between the two communities.

The changing nature of socio-cultural, religious, and political developments in Manipur seeks for a critical enquiry to understand the phenomena of violence with deeper understanding. Looking from the incidents of violence between the various communities, especially between the Pangals and the Meiteis over the years, certain trends can be seen which can be studied with the help of

¹ The Pangals of Manipur are a religio-ethnic category, the descendents of a mixture of Muslim immigrants and Meitei ladies, who follow Islam as their religion. Historically the Pangals have been known officially in the British records as the Muhammadans (Administration Reports of the Manipur State, 1902-03, 03-04, 04-05...., mentioned in B.C. Allen's book, Gazetteer of the Naga Hills and Manipur, 2002, p.45). After the inclusion of the community in the list of OBC in 1992, the community's name has hence come to be known as the Meitei-Pangals as an official category. However, in common the community is still known as the Pangals.

appropriate theoretical injunctions, so that a meaningful understanding of the phenomena can be derived.

In the last four decades several incidents of violence have happened involving the Pangals and the Meiteis, of which the incident of 3rd-5th May, 1993 has been the worst.

The immediate effect of the riot was the death of 100 persons and 149 injured as per official records (Tarapot, 2003, p. 220; Justice DM Sen Report, 2007)^[45]. One hundred and one cases were registered by the police and 423 persons arrested in connection with the incident. Many houses belonging to the Muslim community were burned down in few villages. Many remote Muslim villages bore a deserted look as people had to flee to safer areas. Schools and markets were shut down for few days and normal day to day business was hit severely. After this violent incident, a series of incidents have happened between the two communities, at different locations and for different reasons.

In most of these incidents, the trend so far observed is that majority of the victims are from the Pangal community. In the May incident of 1993, some figures put the total number of people killed as 100 Pangals and 4 Meiteis; whereas unofficial figures put the total numbers of people killed to 140. While three decades have passed, justice has not been served to the victims of the violence, particularly among the minority Meitei Pangal community^[2]. The question of transitional justice is least seen and seldom talked of. The state has not given proper compensation to the victims of the communal violence, but has also not done much to rehabilitate many people who have been impacted by the violence and displaced at many locations inside Manipur.

Starting from this significantly big incident of violence of May 1993, which turn out to be the biggest ever inter-community violence of contemporary Manipur in the plain area; a series of violent incidents have happened across the three decades. 11 cases of lynchings have so far been documented where Pangals have been killed during the time 1991-2022. However, this paper deals with only a part of the larger phenomenon, where the process of internal migration and spatial rearrangement after violence have their bearing on boundary relations between the communities, have been discussed.

After looking at the series of cases of violence that have happened from 1993 onwards, it has become imperative to seek an understanding of the developments in Manipur. Amongst many social realities which have unfolded, some are worth enquiring. These includes 1) Socio-cultural changes among communities of Manipur, particularly among the Pangal community after the violence. 2) The political churning across India and its development in the region. 3) The changing nature of the relationship between power, violence, and social relations. In the process, the question of subjectivity, subjectivation and the symbolic element of negotiating boundary between communities are discussed. So, the final enquiries of this paper are 1) After the violence of 1993 and later, what has been the nature of everyday relations at locations where people have been displaced? 2) What can be understood from the subjective experience of the people who have been displaced? 3) How does spatial rearrangement transpires in the boundary relationship between the Pangals and the Meiteis?

Methodology of the Study

The methodology involved in the study is case study. As a part of a larger analysis, case study of internal displacements from the village Sunulok or Sunurok (now the name has been changed to Twinomjang) is discussed in this paper. Detailed in-depth interviews, mostly of 1.5 to 3 hours of people of different communities have been conducted.

Sampling: The sampling was non-random, non-systematic purposive sampling and the interviews were conducted using an interview schedule with semi structured questions. Sample size was 15. A typed interview schedule was used for convenience for the maximum respondents and majority of them were taken consent to record and sign after the interviews were over. However, in areas where it was sensitive, respondents were not asked consent to sign but were taken an informed prior verbal consent. Over and above the interviews, observation of geographical boundaries, every day and ordinary activities of people and random chats with people of the villages were also done. Interviews at Sunurok Village were conducted with the people of the current Kuki village including the current king (Khullakpa) and other villagers. Impacted Pangal villagers who have left their village have resettled at different locations of Imphal East District and others districts of Manipur. The displaced pangals were interviewed at different locations of the valley area.

Rationale of the Study

Sunulok (Twinomjang) village was the only Muslim village in the hilly areas of Manipur which was completely burned down by Meitei mob who had attacked the village on 5th May, 1993. The whole villagers have been displaced at various locations of Manipur where Pangals settle in majority. The other significance of the village is the notion that the only fully Pangal inhabited village in the hill districts of Manipur was completely uprooted and displaced in the 1993 violence.

At the level of inquiry, this study aimed to unpack shades of meanings of the boundary relations using two contradictory approaches- of methodological individualism given by Weber and the anti-reductionist, holistic approach advocated by Durkheim. A discursive analysis of the phenomenon of violence between the Meiteis and the Pangals gives us two broad avenues of understanding the dynamics of relationship. The fact that most of the intercommunity violence in Manipur starts from isolated individual problems which later takes a collective form, opens a way to understand not just the causality of the incidences of violence per se, using a reductionist framework of "agent-centric approach" to social explanation. But instead, it also opens an avenue to look at the everyday, mundane experiences of individuals and connect with the larger social reality in a post violence condition.

On the other hand, from the interview of the survivors of violence, the idea that experience of individual and embodied trauma relates to a subjectivity that translates to a larger experience and trauma of the collective provides an important avenue to look for a holistic approach. In the analysis of collective memory, narratives of fear and trauma experienced

² The Sangai Express, January 11, 2015. Muslim body seeks compensation for 1993 Meitei-Meitei Pangal riot victims.

in a collective fashion, the approach to understand the subjectivity of people not just from individual subjects reporting their experience, but from the standpoint of the groups through an ensemble of social relations between the individuals, provides an avenue towards a holistic approach.

Understanding violence and boundary

To understand an incident of violence well, we can study the context under which the violence occurs through multiple theoretical approaches. Important dimensions through which we can look into, but should be not limited to, are the form and substance of the violence, its origin, its relation to other incidents of violence, to the existing social and political conditions and to the substance and pattern that follows if there exist. Alvarez and Bachman^[3] maintain that despite differences in the behavior of individual dynamics in an act of violence, violent acts share several essential characteristics which constitute the unity of human aggression. One important characteristic worth looking in their analysis is the idea of commonality of perception and motivation in the incidents of violence. The 'collective behavior' forms a common psyche of people involved in a violent act^[4]. On the other hand, Alvarez and Bachman^[5] maintain that etiological and biological explanation of the theory of violence provides wisdom on the evolution of human society, where in violent behavior has always proved necessary for survival, because it helps in keeping a check and balance mechanism to problems needed for staying alive. The logic of this explanation revolves around the notion of maintaining status and dominance. Though the biological and etiological approaches may not have a complete explanation for all forms of violence, most ethnic and collective violence of the present world have their initial roots in the biological concept of competition. Thus Spielmann (1991, p. 17) says, "Competition occurs when two or more individuals, populations, or species simultaneously use a resource that is actually or potentially limiting" (Schmidt & Schroder, 2001, p. 2).

Violence studies in contemporary India have been looked by different scholars from different vantage points. Veena Das (2006) maintains that looking for the history of violence, one need to look at the "ordinary" and the "everyday life". She also talks about the significance of "ethnography of the local" which bears traces of histories and conflict and accommodation, for a comprehensive study of the episteme of violence. In her book *Violence and Subjectivity* (2000), Das talks about the "bureaucratic procedure" and indirect form of domination that re-signifies trauma by normalizing the terms of business as usual. This is similar to Bourdieu's idea of symbolic power and violence^[6]. Bourdieu views a stratified social world of hierarchies of individual, groups and institutions. He maintains that competitions and conflicts pervade through these hierarchies and through the dynamics of power relations controlled and reproduced by those who maintain better capital and position in the society. This system he says is reproduced inter-generationally without the

conscious recognition of its members.^[7]

Meanwhile, Rowena Robinson in her book, *The Tremors of Violence* (2005), gives the dimension of formation of victim's subjectivity of an ostracized identity in the light of daily impact of violent experiences. In the light of Mumbai and Gujarat communal riots, Rowena, in her work, seeks to answer the question as to how the Muslims construct their identity under the condition of brutalization by physical or symbolic violence. She found out the connection between the narratives of discrimination and the actual violence that takes place. (ibid. pp. 185- 188). From the process of worst cases of otherisation to the cases of discrimination, Rowena, using the concept of role of boundaries and how it is maintained between the communities, found out the notion of self and subjectivity, and the shaping of Muslim identity in the violence prone areas of Mumbai and Delhi. Her study revealed that the making and unmaking of the Muslim identity as the 'other' is done by using many evolved forms of stereotypes about the Muslim community.

Description of the Village and its People before 1993

Sunulok village (now the name has been changed to Twinomjang village) is a small village at the north eastern part of the Kangpokpi District and north east of Imphal city. The village comes under, Saikul Assembly Constituency, one of the reserve assembly constituencies of Manipur. The village is located at the foothill of the ranges of hills located towards the north of the Yaingangpokpi town. Sunulok was inhabited by the Pangals till 1993 with around 40 households. Pangals from many villages of the Imphal valley, particularly from the Imphal East and Imphal West areas like Kairang Muslim village, Kshetri KYC, Kshetri Yangbi, Keikhu, Mayang Imphal, Pankhong, Erong, were had come to settle there. Most of them were seasonal workers, who used to come and stay at their temporary houses or huts only during the cropping season. Only men had moved to the area during the initial period. With time, permanent settlement started and women folk moved in. Thus, with families settling there, a community was formed. It was reported that during the initial period some Meitei labourers had stayed together with the Pangals at some *loushangs* or at the land owners' home. However, with time the Pangals had purchased land for themselves and settled at the newly formed settlement Sunulok.

Most of the families had landholdings in the area as reported. While few of them had large land holdings, maximum had just their homesteads and were there as *lousan-uba* (sharecroppers). The rest were labourers. It was reported by one of the eldest respondents that during the 1960s and early 70s, land development in terms of converting the pristine landscape into paddy fields took place. He said, "*Kuki singna nillaga eikhoi na lou ubani*" meaning the land was dug out by the Kukis and the Pangals used them for cultivation. It was informed that during the early days Pangals, Meities and some Nepalis from different parts of Manipur had come to

³ Alvarez, Alex & Bachman, Ronet. (2008). *Violence: The Enduring Problem*. Singapore: Sage Publications. P2

⁴ Crossley, Nick. (2002). *Making Sense of Social Movement*, Open University Press, Celtic Court, Buckingham, UK

⁵ Abbink, Jon. *Violence and culture: Anthropological and Evolutionary-Psychological Reflections on Inter-Group Conflict in Southern Ethiopia*, Pp. 30 in Schmidt, Bettina E. & Schroder, Ingo W. (ed.) (2001),

Anthropology of Violence and Conflict. London and New York: Routledge Publication

⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre, Translated by Nice, Richard (1992). *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, Pp. 123-134.

⁷ Swartz, David L. (2013). *Symbolic Power, Politics and Intellectuals*, Chicago and London : The University of Chicago Press.

the area as wanderers and labourers or in search of a better life. It was also reported that the locals liked the Pangals as they were considered laborious and honest. Most of the villagers belong to poor families as informed.

The villagers were said to be associated mostly with agricultural activities and rearing livestock. Most of the villagers during the early years of settlement were said to come to the place only during *lousu-pantha* (season of paddy cultivation). After working during the cultivation season, they use to return to their permanent homes with the harvest at different parts of the valley areas. Along with the paddy cultivation, they also reared cattle. During the off season, some of Pangals were engaged in *ee-phanba* (cutting vetiver plant) or logging from the forest. Other crops like *Haa* (Asiatic yam) and *Mangra* (Cassava or Sweet potato) were also grown in plenty and they use to market these products in the markets in Imphal or brought back to their homes in the

valley. They sold these products at different markets in the valley areas. Vetiver plant was then commonly used for thatching roof of houses.

So, people basically moved there as seasonal labourers. However, with time and necessity people started settling there with proper houses constructed. Women folk were said to visit the area only during the harvesting season. However, with time they had also started living in the area permanently. Many of the respondents were found to have used the term "*lawai taba*" referring to their movement to this hilly region for work and livelihood. The sense of a community started developing when a mosque was constructed and people had secured a right to use the hill nearby for logging as well as for other activities including securing a vast area of land for use as a Kabristan. The land was said to have been secured with the necessary approvals required from the forest department of that time.



Fig 1: Location of Sunulok (Twinomjang) (Map not to scale). Courtesy: Google Earth

The Village in the current condition

Sunulok village is now Twinomjang and is in the hands of the Kukis. The approximate size of the village is around 45-cres of settled areas with a large hill tract, forest area and public spaces which are used by the villagers. As per the latest electoral data available on the website of the Election Commission of India, the village has 63 electors listed. The village is located at the foothill at the western side of a hill ranges overlooking the Yaingangpokpi town. It is one of the many villages situated along the flat valley that goes all the way from Yaingangpokpi towards Sanakeithel. The nearest Meitei village from this location is Sanasabi which is located around two kilometers towards the south, at the foothill of the same hill range that runs towards Twinomjang. Thamnepokpi village is located 4kms towards the south on the way towards Chingdai khunou and Sunulok. Yaingangpokpi town is located 5kms south of this village. Chingdai Khunou lies 500 mts towards the west of the village across the green, flat valley. The surrounding villages are also inhabited by different Kuki tribes of which maximum of them are Aimol and Mate tribes as informed by the villagers. The village north of Sunulok is said to be inhabited by the Khongsais. The field work was conducted at Sunulok during August 2019, whereas interviews of the displaced people were

conducted at different times during 2021 and early 2022. The interview could not be conducted at one drive because of the COVID pandemic.

The Exodus on 5th May, 1993

On 3rd of May 1993, Manipur was rocked by the unprecedented violence and rioting took place in many parts of the valley area. Initially the villages at the periphery were not affected by the rioting, however from the second day onwards rioting and arson happened at multiple peripheral Pangal villages across the state. As per the testimonies of people who had faced the violence the village was burned down by a mob of rioting Meiteis on the 5th of May. There were two different sources of information about what happened on 5th May. One source was from two lady respondents who said on 5th of May around 3pm three men in black coloured clothes had come down the hill when they were fetching water at the foothill and they were informed to tell all the Pangals to move to a safe area. The men were said to climb up the hill and moved into the forest. As per these two respondents, they were not sure of what would happen but said, out of fear they had cooked their dinner early that day.

As the news of the violence in the valley was confirmed, out

of apprehensions, the elders of the village contacted the Khongsais and sought protection from them. The Khongsais called an all-Kuki village meeting on the evening of 5th of May. However, at sunset before the meeting had started, it was informed that the rioting Meitei mob had reached the village, torched the houses, and vandalized their properties. Almost all the structures were burned down and properties looted. But there were no casualties in the village. A middle-aged man from the village was killed in the violence but not in the village. The villagers had to run for their life and they took refuge at the nearby Kuki village. There was a total of around 100 Pangals together, maximum of them women and children, including one woman who had just given birth to a child on 3rd of May. One respondent said, that had the meeting of the Khongsai happened earlier, they would have been protected and there would have been no loss of their properties.

As informed, the Khongsai first escorted them to a Nepali village where they stayed there till late in the night. When it was felt that everything was safe the Nepalis escorted them to the next Kuki village. Khongsai (Kuki) villagers in coordination were said to have escorted them all the way to Sanakeithel during the night. Mohammad Rafi (name changed) who was amongst those fleeing villagers said, "one after another Kuki armed volunteers escorted us and hand over to the next village until we reach Sanakeithel during the night". Md Rafi mentioned the route as Sunulok-Ningtoupok- Lokchao-Khunou- Tisumliang- Lekhoupao khun- Chingkhei- Monom- Kachou- Sanakeithel. Between Kachou and Sanakeithel they crossed the Ehang Turel (Iril river) that flows towards the north. Md. Rafi mentioned of the enmity between the Kachou Khun and Sanakeithel on a matter related to land dispute, however he mentioned that volunteers from Kachou had escorted them till the bank of the Iril river at dawn^[8].

After crossing the Iril river on a pipe bridge, they had approached the head of the village. An announcement was made about the arrival of the fleeing Pangals. Sanakeithel is a Tangkhul village where the Tangkhul Nagas settle. The displaced people were warmly welcomed and they were allowed to stay in their community hall. They were given clothes and food. Bond fire was set up to keep the refugees warm. A special prayer was held by the community and all possible help was given to them. The Assam Rifles who were stationed at Sanakeithel had also provided necessary help to the people as informed. Women volunteers had cooked food for the people taking refuge. The Pangals stayed there for 3 days. Lamlai Police came there on the third day. However, as informed by a respondent, they did not trust the Police.^[9] The Assam Rifles then moved them to a safer place in Imphal on the third day. They stayed at a relief camp set up at Golapati (a Muslim locality), in Imphal for three days. From Golapati people were moved to another relief camp set up by the government at TG Higher Secondar School, Imphal. The camp at TG Higher Secondary School was closed-down by the government on 9th May, 1993. From there they were either moved to Kshetri Bengoon Rahmania Ground or at a Public Ground at Kairang Khabeisoi Muslim Village. Some of the displaced people were also moved multiple times from one camp to another for logistical purpose. It was said that displaced people from other villages had also joined at the relief camps at Kairang, Hatta-Golapati and Kshetri

Rahmania ground. Some of the displaced people were said to have moved out of the relief camps and adjusted in the houses of their relatives at different places.

The Field: Mapping the past with the subjectivity of the present

At the time of the field work, there were around 30 houses in the village, including a church. There were no market places nearby except for the few shops at the village and few at Chingdai Khunou and Samusong area, located across the flat paddy fields, towards the western side of Sunulok (Twinomjang). A large public pond was located towards the south of the village. At the time of the interview, a large football ground could be seen where an interview was conducted there. It was known from the interviews of the displaced people that this ground was once used as public ground cum a space to perform *Janazah* (a place where the last ritual prayer is performed before the burial of a dead person). It was also informed that a *Kabristan* (graveyard) is situated at the corner of this ground. A small *lok* (natural stream from the nearby hill) was there towards the south east of the inhabited area. Respondents were found to have a fond memory of this stream. According to the villagers there are no educational institutions in the village, however, few private educational institutions are there at the nearby villages of Chingdai Khunou and Samusong. However, the nearest market and better educational institutions are all located at Yaingangpokpi area, 5kms south of the area. It was informed that maximum of the villagers were farmers. The flat valley area in front of the village is a fertile paddy field where maximum of the villagers work. It was informed by the displaced respondents that many of these paddy fields were once owned by rich Meiteis from far off places in the Imphal region like Singjamei. It was also informed that maximum of the paddy fields was cultivated by the local people as share croppers.

According to the data collected a total of around 38 houses with 238 people (Singh, 2008. P 217) lived in the village in 1993. From various accounts it is understood that the first settlement of the Pangals started in the late 50s, during the post-independence period. A comparison of the current population of the village shows that it was much larger when the Pangals lived there. Though some of the respondents spoke as if Sunulok was a place far away from their home where they have made their second home, the others talked of the village as if it was their new home with a new wish. One of the respondents informed that had there been no such violence, there would have been a huge Pangal settlement there, one of its kind in Manipur.

Subjectivity of Loss

The narrative of the subjectivity of loss could be traced from different perspectives. The first perspective was that of the detachment with the history, belongingness and everyday engagements with the soil, people and environment where people have lived for decades. Sunulok was a village of hope for all the Pangal respondents displaced by the violence. The second narrative was that of loss of livelihood, a primary material detachment with a place. People moved to Sunulok to earn a living, settle, and had built a community there. Except for few, maximum of the people moving there belong to poor families. By the time the violence happened,

⁸ According to the interview of Respondent 4. On 22/1/2022

⁹ Respondent 4

maximum of the settlers had already set up, streamlined and secured their means of livelihood and built a family there. Loss of livelihood provides them the material condition of the subjectivity of loss. The third condition was the clear apathy from the government, as expressed by all the respondents in terms of rehabilitation and rebuilding their lives. Except of providing few Galvanized tin sheets (GI sheets) to few of the displaced people, there were no material help despite given them occasional promises. This can also be related with the experience of the displaced people from Purum Pangaltabi^[10] and Samusang-Shantipur. There was no effort of rehabilitation, neither from the district administration nor from the NGOs, beyond the basic efforts made during the first few weeks of the violence. As informed by maximum of the respondents, they had rescued themselves from the disaster, except for few philanthropists from the community who had helped them occasionally. The fourth and the final perspective for the subjectivity of loss is that of victims' subjectivity towards the perpetrators. Maximum of the victims continue to live with embodied violence. Memory serves as an important constituent for them to delve into the subjectivity of a battered self, often connecting between the existing and past realities of identity politics.

There were families from Leishangkong (village name changed) with huge landholding and large number of cattle^[11]. They had even employed Nepalis to look after their cattle. Most of their harvested crops were taken to their original villages where they also had permanent homes. There was a fully functional mosque with a permanent imam and his family. He was from Mayang Imphal. Maximum of them expressed that at the 'Kabristan', graves of many Pangals still exists to date. There was a Janazah ground which still exists as a playground for the newly christened village "Twinomjang". Interview with (late) Abdulla's (name changed) family including his widowed wife reveals that their memory is still fresh. They were initially not happy with the interview saying it has reminded them of the extremely painful past. Both mother and son Abul (name changed) used the term, "*thawai si prok prok chak e*" meaning... "Our heart boils (boiling sound emphasized)" to think of what had happened.

Abdulla's youngest son informed of their total amount of land to be 35 acres and a total of 33 cattle with a whopping approximate figure of around 800 bags of rice harvested annually. They used to employ "many people" to cultivate their land. It was informed that the excess harvest used to be carried on bullock carts to their respective villages. They narrated their heart-breaking ordeal of loss, both of property and a memory of the violence in corporeal form. Abul's elder sister had given birth to a child on 3rd of May 1993 and the painful ordeal of running with the newborn across the hills up to Sana Keithel on 5th May, reduced her to a "half-crazy" as described by him and as "mentally challenged" as expressed by her mother. Abul's sister remains in a sorry state at their home. The reactions she gave from a quarter inside when she overheard the conversation in the drawing room clearly tells her deep-seated memory that has traumatized her for three decades.

Abul's bother Mr Khan (65 yrs approx.) (name changed), joined the chat and informed that during those days when harvested paddy used to be carried in loads on bullock carts, they often rested at the houses of Meitei friends along the

way. Sometime they had to spend the night there and everything was safe and good. Md. Rafi (around 70 yrs) (name changed), another respondent from the same locality also expressed that during night when a they carried the paddy bags to their ancestral villages and when their bullock cart broke down, they often use to call out "*Ho Khura Ho mama*" to the Meitei elders living along the road. He said their response would be "what happened, just take one of ours and carry on your journey". He said they often use to take rest at Meitei's house on the way. Mr. Rafi once broke down saying every evening he remembers the village and feels emotional. He cried remembering the loss of his hard earned 144 bags of dried paddy after harvest, some looted, the rest burned (as he heard). He had never visited the place again after the violence. Abul's mother also broke down when she talked about how it was heard that their *kei* (a granary) kept burning for almost a week. She remembered how much well off they were at that time and how all their wishes have gone down the drain.

Their testimonies revealed how their homestead were coercively and forcefully taken away by the Kukis and how their cows were killed and eaten. They had to sell off their paddy fields at a throw away price and have been forced to live a life in poverty with embodied trauma, little to be looked after by the state. Mohammad Jamir (around 60 yrs) (name changed) recalled how he had never been able to get back his money given to the Kuki villagers. This shows how they have been reduced to a helpless situation; of a loss they have never been able to recover again. In a similar fashion, the other three interviews with Mrs Banu (65yrs) (name changed) and Mr. Khamba (70 yrs) (name changed) of Kshetri Yangbi Leikai along with Mohammad Imran (40 yrs) (name changed) expressed similar loss of property. This extended family continue to live in a makeshift house even after three decades of the violence.

Testimonies and fractured Subjectivities

Mrs Banu's testimony of their exodus on foot towards Sanakeithel at dusk on 5th of May, escorted by the Khongsais, Nepalis and Kukis, village after village and finally handing over to the Nagas of Sanakeithel (the Kuki-Naga crisis was still active at that time) after crossing a river (she remembered as Yang River) at dawn informs us different meanings of the nature of the crisis, the inter-community relations maintained at that time and dimensions of humanity observed during the time of crisis. Mrs. Banu informed that the whole villagers of Sunulok were sheltered inside the community hall of Sanakeithel, hosted by the people of the town. Food, clothes, and other necessary items were said to be provided by the Naga brethren and special prayers were held by the people of the area. Mrs Banu still keeps the Aluminium plate which was given by the camp organizers of Sanakeithel and she said she will keep it as a token of memory, love and thanks to the people of Sanakeithel forever. She mentioned that food was cooked by lady volunteers and they treated them very comfortably and with care. Anybody in need of cloth were provided and *Haofees* (traditional woolen shawl of the hill tribes) were said to be distributed along with some amount of money.

Memories and hope expressed by the respondents gives a dimension of the impact of the violence in terms of

¹⁰ Refer to Singh, 2008. Pp 216-228

¹¹ Interview with Respondent 6, 26th Jan, 2022

intergenerational loss. Mrs. Banu recounted her memory of the Kabristan at Sunulok, the near and dear ones who have been buried there, and how much she missed them, never been able to visit their kabristan again. She remembers the *Leihou* tree grown at the graveyard site of her sister-in-law Eman (name changed) and said she once plucked a leihou flower from there. Her memory of the Masjid in the village and the nights of Ramadhan, the Imam from Mayang Imphal and his family, the leikai committee with one Khullakpam Rashid as secretary tells us about the loss of an organized village. She also remembered about the daily life there; how much she missed the days of *lousupantha* (season of rice plantation) when they could work hard and harvest more than enough amount of paddy each year. Her memories of their warm and cordial relationship with the neighbouring Kukis and Khonjais, of kinship relationships maintained till date tells a story of a unique inter-community harmony maintained during that time. Towards the end of the interview, Mrs Banu said, "*Ibungo ut oina tumlak eni da*", meaning dear son, we were reduced to ash by the incident. This informs us about the amount of devastation experienced by the victims.

Maximum of the children of high school age playing football at a playground at Samusong did not know where Sunulok was. The first person interviewed was an old man in the 80s, a native of the Kuki village Samusong, located just across the paddy fields west of Sunulok. It was accidental, when the location of Sunulok was asked to this old gentleman walking down the road, he suddenly looked straight into my eyes and asked, Are you from Mayang Imphal?"^[12]. Startled and when the answer was yes, "not so far from Mayang Imphal". He said "*Eh ngdi nakhun da lakpanine*" meaning "you have actually come to your home (village)". That sparked the initiation of the interview, sitting comfortably on the roadside. The gentleman remembered the days of the harmonious existence during the pre-1993 period and about his friendship with the Pangal villagers. He mentioned about how they had worked together at the paddy field and of the days spent in '*ee fanba*' (cutting vetiver grass) together. He also mentioned about the marriage and kinship relationship maintained between the two communities and how much he missed those days of harmonious co-existence. The displaced people of Sunulok have not gone to the village again, except for few who were said to have visited to see what had happened to their properties. They were said to have asked to come back to the villages, however respondents have given their view that they were afraid of going back to the place despite feeling their loss.

An old Kuki lady of around 75yrs was met at Sunulok carrying a *Haosam* (a typical tribal basket carried on the back). On being greeted and asked her about Sunulok in Manipuri, the first response from her was, "*Ng Mayang Imphal dagira, ng Apik Khangbro?*" meaning, are you from Mayang Imphal; do you know Apik? When asked who Apik was, she replied, "my son-in law". She expressed about how much she missed her grandchildren. While maximum of the respondents from amongst the displaced people relate their memory with the current subjectivity of loss, helplessness and a beautiful past, maximum of the respondents in the current Sunulok village were apprehensive about the purpose of the exercise. Respondents including the head of the Sunulok village explained only few things about

the village's history.

Discussion

Violence of May 1993 between the Meiteis and the Pangals was for the villagers of Sunulok an unimaginable disaster, as would be for other victims. The gruesome violence did not only cause destruction to life and properties of the weaker community; however, it also caused them to be internally displaced that caused spatial rearrangement in the way a community after a communal violence organize their way of settlement.

The fact that the displaced people disagree to the request of going back to settle at the village was declined, hints that despite given the necessary condition for maintaining safety and security, these people must have never felt safe to live isolated and risk their life again. This gives us a dimension in the study of violence and its transgenerational impact in the long run. It gives us an idea of how victim's subjectivity is not just shaped by the particular violence they have encountered but also by the discourse of peace making and other contemporary developments in the aftermath of the violence.

The most important observation is the notion that people from the valley are not allowed to settle in the hills. However, Sunulok was in the hills and it was a Pangal village. The destruction of the village had served to destroy the example of the only Pangal village in the hills living together harmoniously with the local tribals. Over and above this, a stark spatial reorganization could be seen in a post violence condition, where people of the Muslim community who had lived in the peripheral areas were found to have consolidated in areas where the Pangals settle in Majority. This has contributed to a process of reification amongst communities and gradual ghettoization of the smaller communities, if we look at the larger pictures involving other areas where there have been cases of more destruction and displacement of people.

Another important observation was that the presence of a field worker who happened to belong to a community of the previous owner of the village after a span of almost three decades seemed to have induced the material conditions of instant subjectivation to the villagers of the younger generations. This subjectivity was in complete contrast to the subjectivity materialized by memory and sense of loss felt by the displaced Pangals.

Conclusion

Sunulok was one of the many peripheral Pangal villages affected by the 1993 violence between the Pangals and the Meiteis. This was also one of the many villages completely uprooted and displaced by the violence. This study gives us a clear picture of the different perspective of loss in material, subjective and symbolic forms. The study also gives us the different dimensions of victim's subjectivity of loss. The sorry state of State's response to victims of violence has been studied and analyzed in other works on collective violence between the Meiteis and the Pangals. However, this paper delves further into the abstract world of memory and victim's subjectivity and how they connect with their realities of everyday lives in contemporary times. The idea of spatial rearrangement in the Pangal society has also been flagged off. Further studies on the topic can be rewarding and can

¹² Mr. Thangpo (name changed) interviewed on 30th August, 2019

contribute to knowledge production in the area.

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