

# TWO DAY INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

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## DIGITAL, DIVERSITY, DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT

Exploring the Internet's Impact on  
Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding,  
Democracy, and Regional Development  
in North East India

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> July

**Venue:** Manipur University,  
Canchipur, Imphal, Manipur





## TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

### Digital, Diversity, Democracy & Development

Exploring the Internet's Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding,  
Democracy, and Regional Development in North East India

## Book of Abstracts

Organised by:

Department of Political Science, Manipur University

Council for Social & Digital Development, Guwahati

North East Development Foundation, Guwahati

With Support from North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC)

&

National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT)

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## MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warmest greetings on the occasion of this Two-Day International Seminar jointly organised by the Department of Political Science, Manipur University, the Council for Social & Digital Development, and the North East Development Foundation, with the support of the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) and the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT).

The theme of this seminar— *Digital, Diversity, Democracy and Development: Exploring the Internet's Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding, Democracy, and Regional Development in North East India* —is of profound relevance to our times, especially in India's North Eastern region, which stands at a critical intersection of digital transformation, socio-political diversity, and developmental aspirations. As digital technologies reshape conflict, governance, and development, it is essential to reflect on their complex implications for democratic participation, peacebuilding, and regional growth.

This Book of Abstracts presents a wide range of insightful contributions that critically engage with key issues such as digital governance, misinformation, marginalised voices, identity politics, and the transformative potentials and risks of technology within complex socio-political contexts.

I am confident that the deliberations in this seminar will not only enrich academic discourse but will also offer policy-relevant insights to inform inclusive and democratic development in the region. I commend the organisers and contributors for their efforts and extend my best wishes for a successful and impactful seminar.

**Prof. N. Lokendra Singh**



## DEAN

School of Social Sciences  
Manipur University



## MESSAGE

With great pleasure I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Department of Political Science, Manipur University on the successful publication of this book of abstracts, a compilation emerging from the thought-provoking seminar titled “Digital, Diversity, Democracy, and Development: Exploring the Internet’s Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding, Democracy and Regional Development in North East India,” organized by the department.

This timely volume captures the intellectual spirit and scholarly engagement that defined the seminar. In an era where digital technologies intersect deeply with socio-political realities, particularly in a region as diverse and sensitive as North East India, the discussions and contributions compiled here offer valuable insights. The abstracts reflect the multidimensional impact of the internet, from shaping democratic practices to influencing conflict narratives and peacebuilding processes, while also opening new avenues for inclusive regional development to the organizers for bringing together a wide range of voices — academics, practitioners, and emerging scholars — and for curating these perspectives with such care and purpose. This publication not only serves as a record of academic inquiry but also as a foundation for future research, dialogue, and policy engagement.

I extend my best wishes to all contributors and hope this volume inspires deeper exploration and informed action toward building a more inclusive and peaceful digital society.

**Prof. Memcha Loitongbam**



## **DIRECTOR**

Council for Social and Digital  
Development (CSDD)  
Guwahati | New Delhi



## **MESSAGE**

It is with immense pleasure that I address you on the occasion of the two-day International Seminar on “Digital, Diversity, Democracy and Development: Exploring the Internet’s Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding, Democracy, and Regional Development in North East India.” This seminar, jointly organized by the Department of Political Science, Manipur University, the Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD), and the North East Development Foundation (NEDF), with support from NESRC and NIELIT, is a timely and crucial initiative.

The internet, while a powerful tool for connection and progress, has also emerged as a complex battleground in our regions and societies. As highlighted in the seminar’s core themes, we have witnessed how digital platforms can exacerbate existing socio-political challenges, fuelling misinformation, hate speech, and online polarisation, which can unfortunately spill over into real-world conflicts. The prolonged internet shutdowns in Manipur, and incidents across the North East involving divisive online narratives, underscore the urgent need to understand and address these dynamics.

However, this seminar is not merely about identifying challenges. It is about exploring innovative strategies to harness the internet as a “digital bridge” for peacebuilding, reconciliation, and fostering a truly inclusive and democratic society. Our discussions will delve into how digital tools can promote inter-community dialogue, digital literacy, and the integration of indigenous knowledge for sustainable peace.

The diverse range of papers presented in this abstract book reflects the multifaceted nature of this topic and the commitment of researchers and practitioners to finding solutions. I am confident that the insights shared over these two days will contribute significantly to developing actionable recommendations for stakeholders, promoting responsible digital citizenship, and ultimately strengthening the social and democratic fabric of North East India. This will contribute to the efforts of the government and administration in tackling rising digital crimes and conflicts.

Thank you for your participation and valuable contributions to this vital dialogue.

Dr. Syed Sultan Kazi





## **PRESIDENT**

North East Development  
Foundation (NEDF), Guwahati



## **MESSAGE**

On behalf of the North East Development Foundation (NEDF), I am honoured to welcome you to this important International Seminar on “Digital, Diversity, Democracy and Development: Exploring the Internet’s Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding, Democracy, and Regional Development in North East India.” This event, in collaboration with Manipur University and other esteemed partners, is a testament to our shared commitment to the progress and peace of our region.

At NEDF, we believe in empowering communities through sustainable development. The themes of this seminar resonate deeply with our mission, especially in understanding how digital advancements can either contribute to or hinder social harmony and growth. We recognize the complex role the internet plays in our diverse society, from fostering connectivity and economic opportunities to presenting challenges like the spread of misinformation and social division.

This seminar provides a crucial platform for experts, policymakers, and community leaders to discuss these critical issues. By examining both the challenges and the opportunities presented by the digital age, we can collectively work towards leveraging technology for positive change. I am particularly eager to see the innovative ideas and solutions that will emerge from the discussions over these two days, which I believe will guide us in building a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous North East India.

Thank you all for being a part of this vital conversation.

Sharmistha Dekka



## HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Department of Political Science  
Manipur University



## MESSAGE

It is with great academic pride and heartfelt warmth that I extend a cordial welcome to all delegates and participants of the Two-Day International Seminar on “Digital, Diversity, Democracy and Development: Exploring the Internet’s Impact on Conflict Dynamics, Peacebuilding, Democracy, and Regional Development in North East India” at Manipur University.

This seminar is a timely and significant initiative aimed at examining the complex and evolving role of digital technologies in shaping conflict dynamics, fostering peacebuilding, deepening democratic practices, and advancing regional development in North East India. At a time when the digital sphere is increasingly central to our political, social and economic lives, especially in conflict-affected regions, this platform offers an opportunity to engage with diverse voices from academia, government and media.

As the seminar coordinator, I am deeply encouraged by the enthusiastic academic response to our call for papers. The abstracts compiled in this volume present diverse perspectives, underscoring the dedicated efforts who are deeply engaged in exploring the impact of digital transformations on one of India’s most diverse and complex regions.

On behalf of the organising committee, I express my sincere gratitude to all delegates, collaborating institutions and participants for their scholarly involvement and institutional support. I hope this seminar will foster meaningful discussions and contribute to enduring academic progress.

With warm regards and best wishes for a productive and enriching seminar.

**Prof. Nameirakpam Bijen Meetei**



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# SECTION A



## Digital Media Literacy for Sustainable Peace, Democracy, and Development

Professor Obijiofor Aginam

*Director, UNESCO MGIEP*

The digital space has helped advance global conversations and collaboration but also exacerbated and fanned identity-based divisions in society. In today's interconnected world, fostering digital literacy, global citizenship education and media literacy have become essential—not only for personal development but also for “promoting peaceful and inclusive societies”. Equipping individuals with the tools to critically evaluate online content, recognize misinformation, and understanding media biases fosters responsible decision-making and self-awareness. Critical inquiry builds cognitive skills, a questioning mindset, and encourages civic engagement by prompting reflection on how online content shapes perception and action.

UNESCO MGIEP operates in building social and emotional skills such as empathy, compassion, mindfulness, collaboration, collective problem solving, critical inquiry, appreciating interdependence and systems thinking. These skills collectively boost and support emotional resilience that helps to navigate media in the digital age responsibly and in countering online hate and polarization. Ethical journalism can be repositioned as an effective peace building tool and pathway that highlights the narratives of unity, mutual respect and coexistence, resilience, and dialogue over sensationalism. Addressing hate speech, trolling, and digital echo chambers through empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution helps young people navigate digital spaces with compassion. Interactive methods like digital storytelling or role-playing allow young people to step into others' shoes, exploring diverse identities and perspectives. These activities cultivate empathy, encouraging dialogue over division.

UNESCO MGIEP focuses on empowering youth as peacebuilders, enhancing civic participation, and leadership. Youth-led campaigns promote inclusion and digital peace leveraging the power of social media for advocacy. Whether raising awareness on mental well-being, building emotional resilience, working towards behavioural change for climate justice, or global citizenship, these initiatives foster a sense of agency and purpose towards building sustainable and peaceful societies.

In regions experiencing political tension or ethnic divides — like parts of Northeast India — misinformation and manipulated media can fuel distrust, deepen divisions, and trigger violence. This keynote address will explore how UNESCO and MGIEP's Media and Information Literacy norms and training modules advances SDG 16 – the

promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.

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**Viral Wars: How false information leads to ethnic violence,  
cross-border conflicts, and threatens the stability of the region**

Dr. Shahid Siddiqui

*(Foreign Correspondent)*

*Specialist in International Affairs with WNN, USA*

In today's interconnected world, false information has become a major cause of instability, affecting how societies see conflict, deal with crises, and communicate across boundaries. This presentation talks about how digital misinformation is making ethnic violence and international tensions worse. It uses three real-life examples: the ethnic unrest in Manipur, the fallout from the 2025 Pahalgam terror attack in India, and the information warfare that is going on in the Iran-Israel conflict.

Violence in Manipur, a northeastern Indian state with a complicated mix of ethnic groups, rose sharply from 2023 to 2025. This was made worse by the uncontrolled distribution of false or misleading information online. Indian digital rights groups and media watchdogs like Alt News and BoomLive have confirmed that fake photographs and provocative videos spread rapidly on networks like WhatsApp and Facebook. These digital artifacts, which were often taken out of context or wrongly ascribed, made things worse amongst communities and hurt efforts to keep the peace. Some of the false information came from or was spread by sources across the border in Myanmar, making the already unstable social and political situation in the region even worse.

After the Pahalgam terrorist assault in 2025, which killed several people and security officials, there was a lot of unconfirmed material on the internet claiming to show military response or communal unrest. Even though many of these films and messages were eventually revealed to have nothing to do with the actual event, they had a big effect right away. Fact-checkers and digital monitoring groups say that the false information circulated quickly through social media and private messaging apps, causing anger among nationalists and increasing distrust between Indian and Pakistani audiences. Even after government officials made things clear, a lot of the false information stayed in circulation for days. This showed big holes in content filtering and real-time response systems.

The Iran-Israel conflict has also been a target for complex disinformation efforts.





classical public sphere theory with contemporary frameworks of digital activism, this paper examines how digital spaces in both contexts are shaped by conflict, resistance, and control. It argues for a rights-based, participatory approach to digital governance that recognizes the dual role of online platforms as both instruments of empowerment and tools of suppression in fragile democracies.

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### **Social media, misinformation, and Electoral Democracy**

Sanjay Kumar

*Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi*

Ever since the media started playing a somewhat partisan role, the advent of social media had generated a lot of hope amongst the people. There was a shared belief that since mainstream media is biased, very often take sides, hide much more than it reveals and is being extremely selective, social media could help in making the playing field more even. Since Social media platforms are very less expensive, does not require high level of technical expertise, any body can use social media respecting the due regulation to send out their messages. It is true that the last few years in India has witnessed a massive growth of Social Media platforms. The reach of social media has expanded over the years, but at the same time, it is also true that the trust of the people in social media has declined over the years. In a situation when trust in social media has declined how do we expect social media to play a positive role in our lives whether it is about elections, democracy or any other aspect of our day-to-day life.

The last one decade has not only witnessed social media reaching out to a very large section of people, this period has also witnessed proliferation of social media platforms, new social media platforms coming up one after another. Till few years ago, we had face book (now Meta), Tweeter, WhatsApp, but now we have newer platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and many more.

One would expect that with increasing social media platforms, the trust of the people in social platform may also be increasing. But unfortunately, that is not the case. A recent study by Lokniti-CSDS indicate the government owned media is trusted most while the online news websites are least trusted. As per the survey, 64% trusted the government owned news channel in varying degrees, while online news websites are trusted by only 34% Indians. The private news channels are trusted by 48% Indians in varying degrees. The newspapers are still highly trusted (60% people trust) amongst Indians.

The reason for growing disbelief in media (both mainline and social media) is mainly because of two reasons, first the evidence from Lokniti-CSDs survey indicate, there is a share belief that the media is biased in terms of what kind of new it shows or reports, it is tilted more in favour of the privileged compared to those who are on the margins. Second a very large proportion of news which gets reported is fake news compared to the real/honest news. It is understandable that if this is how media/social media is viewed by the people, the trust in media/social media is bound to be low.

The study also revealed that there is a shared belief that the Indian media (includes both Mainline media and social media) given attention more the privileged compared to those who are on the margins of Indian Society. News related to rich people gets reported more compared to the poor, the news related to the rural population is far less reported compared to the new related to the urban population. The news related to the North Eastern states is reported far less compared to the bigger states of the North, South and Western India. The news related to the Dalits and Adivasi gets reported in much lesser numbers compared to the news related to the upper castes and other dominant castes.

If this is how media/social media works and if this is the level of trust people have in media/social media one can imagine what kind of a role media/social media can play in social, economic and political development?

The proliferation of social media has been able to bridge the gap of information divide, but unfortunately, it Is not helping the people in knowing the truth or reality since what is being posted on the social media is more negative than positive, more fake news than real news. Unfortunately, the social media is not helping in strengthening electoral democracy as social media is being used for negative camping, spreading more negative news compared to positive messages. Not only it is spreading misinformation about politics, it is also spreading misinformation about other issues which concern out daily lives.

### Challenges of trauma representation in the digital era

Pradip Phanjoubam

*(Senior Journalist, author, and former fellow Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla)*

One of the chief hurdles in overcoming any traumatic conflict situation is overcoming the tendency of “selective empathy”. Scholars have called this tribalism, often leading to a victimhood syndrome which inhibits dialogic initiative to resolve the crisis

in hand. The empathy circle must therefore widen to bring within it even the adversaries in what John Paul Lederach termed as “The Moral Imagination”. Only this can lead to a realisation that the trauma of this conflict is shared and not unique to either, and in the courage to acknowledge this, find common redemption. In the Manipur situation for instance, there can be no question that both the warring sides have been victims as well as perpetrators, depending on the sites of the riots.

The second hurdle also has to do again with selective empathy, but this time not of the parties in the conflict, but of observers and commentators who write from the vantage of the ideologies they profess and the conflict templates they are familiar with. They can also suffer from an acquired victimhood syndrome aligning with the side they choose to identify with, a phenomenon Dominick LaCapra calls “surrogate victimage” in his book “Writing History, Writing Trauma”. When subjects of the conflict are trapped in selective empathy it is undesirable but understandable, but when supposed objective commentators do it, it is dangerous, for they can end up widening the conflict fault-lines, making resolutions even more difficult.

As LaCapra argues, representing trauma truthfully involves keeping a very fine balance between a subjective and objective view of the trauma event. Neither is to be dismissed and neither is to be taken for granted as the complete parameter in itself in formulating a narrative. The ideal position is what he terms as the “middle voice” which combines the lived experience of the subject of the traumatic events as well as the academic distance an objective observer. This A “subject-analyst” – somebody who feels as a subject does as well as sees as an analyst – in his words is the one who can speak with this “middle voice”, and portray a trauma situation most truthfully. This paper will look into the onerous challenge of trauma representation and how this problem has been augmented, most of the time for the worst, by the advent of the digital age.

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### **Intersections of Digital Technology, Social Diversity, Democratic Practice and Development: A Comprehensive Analysis**

Dr R.K. Nimai Singh  
*Retd. IAS and Columnist*

This comprehensive analysis examines the complex, multifaceted relationships between digital technology, social diversity, democratic participation, and development outcomes in the contemporary global landscape. Drawing from extensive interdisciplinary research and emerging theoretical frameworks, this study reveals that

digital technologies create simultaneously transformative opportunities and profound risks for inclusive development and democratic governance. The analysis demonstrates that over half the global population lacks access to high-speed broadband, with compounding negative effects on economic and political equality, while among all internet users, 67% are men and 61.8% are women and although this is more pronounced in the least developed countries, this inequality is observed in practically every region of the world. Through an intersectional lens informed by Sen's capability approach, critical digital literacy theory, and contemporary postcolonial digital studies, this work argues that meaningful digital inclusion requires not merely infrastructure expansion but comprehensive attention to cultural, linguistic, social, and epistemic factors that shape technology adoption, usage patterns, and democratic outcomes. The analysis introduces the concept of "digital justice" as a framework for understanding how equitable digital transformation can contribute to both human development and democratic deepening.

### **Digitizing Justice: The Role of the Internet in Conflict, Peace building, and Democratic Renewal in Manipur**

Yumnam Rupachandra

*Editor-in-Chief*

*Impact TV News*

Since May 3, 2023, Manipur has been gripped by an ethno-political crisis rooted in deep historical grievances, identity politics, war on drug, illegal immigrants, forest encroachment and competing narratives of justice and marginalization. Though there is hall mark of preplanned engineering of the entire crisis dating back several decades, the immediate trigger is the protest by the Kuki community against a Manipur High Court directive concerning Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the Meitei community which erupted into violence, polarizing communities and institutionalizing mistrust.

Internet access has since been weaponized by the state as both a tool of suppression and a means to control the flow of information, ostensibly to curb misinformation on one hand and by the community to spread hatred and disinformation through various social media platforms like Whatsapp, facebook, youtube etc.

However, this digital censorship has also undermined transparency and democratic participation. This paper examines the multifaceted role the Internet can play in conflict dynamics, peace building, democratic accountability, and regional development in Manipur. It critically assesses how digital access can counter disinformation, foster civic

engagement, and expose structural inequalities—while also acknowledging the risks of misuse. The paper argues that a people-centric digital strategy is essential for building a just and democratic Manipur, especially amidst rising tensions fueled by drug money, illegal immigration, and central political favoritism.

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### **Digital Media and Conflict Framing in Manipur (May 2023–Present)**

Dhiren A. Sadokpam

*Editor-in-Chief*

*The Frontier Manipur*

Digital and social media have fundamentally reshaped the epistemic space and collective action framing of the Manipur conflict since May 2023. Platforms became contested arenas for ethnic narratives (Valley vs. Kuki-Zo), weaponizing graphic evidence of initial violence to entrench mutual victimhood and legitimize retaliatory violence, hindering reconciliation. This performative documentation amplified militant “grey-zone warfare” (IEDs, sabotage, kidnappings), accelerating collective securitization, eroding state legitimacy, and tacitly endorsing non-state actor capabilities – directly challenging the state’s operational reframing efforts.

Digital dissent critically undermined the state’s communicative legitimacy, exposing its incoherent strategic narrative regarding ethnic violence and its causes. Critics leveraged platforms to challenge official security accounts and amplify allegations of state inaction/bias, fragmenting the public sphere. Simultaneously, online spaces enabled transnational advocacy networks (diaspora, international actors) to mobilize, reinforcing hard-line positions, marginalizing moderate voices, and complicating conflict resolution or even transformation. Thus, digital media intensified the conflict by accelerating polarization, visually codifying tactical escalations, contesting state sovereignty over narrative and security, and facilitating external mobilization. This digital dimension has deepened societal cleavages and critically complicated state capacity for effective response in Manipur.

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**A Study on the Report of the Editors Guild of India on the  
Ethnic Violence in Manipur**

Dr Mangoljao Maibam

*Assistant Professor,*

*Department of Political Science*

*&*

*Former Co-ordinator,*

*Media and Journalism Diploma Course, N.G. College, Imphal*

Telling the truth has been the simplest and most complicated function of journalism. That critical but elusive task starts with describing what happened, sometimes based on a reporter's eyewitness account, more often based on the accounts of others, and, in the case of investigative work, after the journalist has assembled enough accounts, documents, and other evidence to declare something of significance with authority. Nonetheless, while acknowledging that getting the facts right remains journalism's core function – and that includes trying to get at “the truth about the fact”, as the Hutchins Commission put it in 1947. It should also be remembered that the news has never belonged to journalists. Any news has always belonged to the public. News is the social flow, the stream of information, the spark of discovery, the spotlight on problems, the working through the solutions, the gathering to celebrate, the full range of generating knowledge that creates community.

In light of the above two premises, the Editors Guild of India's (EGI) Report on Manipur ethnic conflict can be studied. The EGI team came to Manipur after it received a written complaint from the Indian Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps Headquarters, claiming “unethical and ex parte reporting of incidents of Manipur by vernacular media” which have been indulging in outright misrepresentation of facts and the process may be “one of the major contributors to the instigation of further violence in the state”. Then, a Three-Member Team of EGI comprising Ms. Seema Guha, Mr. Bharat Bhusan, and Mr. Sanjoy visited Manipur from August 7 to 10, 2023.

The team met a cross-section of reporters, editors, the representatives of the Editors Guild of Manipur (EGM), All Manipur Working Journalists Union, civil society activists, public intellectuals, women affected by the violence, tribal spokespersons, and representatives of the security forces operating in Manipur. A fact-finding report on the Manipur violence was published by the team in September 2023.

After its publication, the EGI's report came into the public's domain, and there

were many backlashes against its bias and factually inaccurate Report. This paper is mainly to examine whether the EGI team sincerely follows the ethics of journalism in a true sense or not. The paper will also discuss why there are many public outcries against the report of the EGI on the Manipur ethnic crisis.

Keywords: EGI, EGM, ethics of journalism, ethnic conflict, Indian Army, and Manipur violence.

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### **Community-Led Digital Initiatives for Social Inclusion and Peace**

Dr. Thiyam Bharat Singh

*Associate Professor*

*CSSI, Manipur University*

The rapid increase in internet penetration in Northeast India has transformed the region's socio-political landscape, offering both opportunities for enhanced connectivity and challenges stemming from the proliferation of misinformation and divisive narratives. This paper explores the dual-edged nature of digital platforms in the region, highlighting how they can exacerbate ethnic tensions while also serving as tools for community-led initiatives aimed at fostering social inclusion and peace. The analysis delves into recent incidents of Manipur conflict to illustrate the role of social media in conflict escalation and the subsequent state responses, including internet shutdowns. It emphasises the urgent need for digital literacy, responsible online behaviour, and inclusive practices to mitigate the risks associated with misinformation and online polarisation. Furthermore, the paper advocates for community-led digital initiatives that empower marginalised voices, integrate indigenous knowledge, and promote inter-community dialogue. By examining the potential of digital tools for peace-building and reconciliation, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for local stakeholders, enhance capacity for digital peace-building, and strengthen networks that contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive society in Northeast India.

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## Violent Identity Politics, Internet and Peace in Manipur

Dr. N. Somorendro Singh

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,  
Maharaja Bodhchandra College, Imphal, Manipur*

Manipur, a State of Indian Union bordering with Myanmar is one of the oldest political entities in the world. From independent kingdom for centuries to a Princely State under the British colonial rule(1891-1947), her political status kept changing till Statehood in 1972. Manipur is a unique multi-ethnic-lingual-religious-cultural society from the ancient time. Since 1990s Manipur hills have become a violent prone zone of the world due to divisive identity politics by about thirty armed groups of Naga-Chin-Kuki-Zomi. These divisive armed groups demand conflicting non-existent separate exclusive political statuses. Clashes of Kuki-Hmar (1960), Naga-Kuki (1993), Kuki-Paite (1997), Kuki-Tamil(Moreh-1995), Kuki-Meitei (Moreh-2007) etc. indicate expansion of Kuki armed groups in Manipur hills. ‘Suspension of Operation’ and ‘talks’ with twenty-five armed Chin-Kuki-Zomi groups neither bring peace nor political solutions. Thus new violence and common sufferings occur since 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023. Internet shut down was imposed to ‘prevent’ violence. However violence occurred in Manipur hills even before internet/social media revolution. For decades Manipur hills have been witnessing ethnocentric approaches by the conservative tribal elites, illegal activities and failure to protect/empower the rights of citizens under India’s democratic and federal politics.

The paper examines the causes of the violent identity politics specially of Chin-Kuki-Zomi divisive armed groups in Manipur hills and their consequences. It discusses why ‘suspension of operations’, ‘appeasement’ and ‘talks’ with separatist armed groups and internet shut down did not ensure normal life in Manipur. It argues that for peace it is essential to ensure rule of law and adequate police force in Manipur hills with participation in ‘dialogue’ process by the stakeholders on the democratic and federal principles.

Keywords: Identity politics, violent prone, rule of law, democratic principles and peace.



## **From Tweets to Turmoil: Social Media's Role in Global Conflict Escalation**

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In the digital era, social media has transformed global communication, civic engagement, and conflict dynamics. While these platforms facilitate information sharing and community building, they have also increasingly been implicated in the escalation of violence and social unrest. This paper critically examines the role of social media in conflict escalation through the lens of four high-profile case studies: the Arab Spring uprisings (2010–2012), the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar (2016–2017), the Capitol Hill insurrection in the United States (2021), and ethnic tensions in Ethiopia during the Tigray conflict (2020–present). Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship from media studies, political science, conflict resolution, and digital governance, the study identifies key mechanisms by which social media accelerates conflict: the viral spread of hate speech and disinformation, reinforcement of in-group/out-group narratives via algorithmic echo chambers, and real-time coordination of collective violence or protest.

Each case illustrates how unregulated digital environments can inflame pre-existing grievances, polarize communities, and undermine institutional trust. The analysis also explores the role of platform design, state manipulation of online discourse, and gaps in content moderation. The paper calls for a holistic awareness of effective digital governance structures, digital literacy awareness, and state accountability. This research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how social media functions as a tool of empowerment and a vector for destabilization in contemporary conflict landscapes.

**Keywords:** social media; peacebuilding; conflict escalation; algorithmic polarization; digital governance.

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### **Digital Democracy in the Periphery**

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The 21<sup>st</sup> century is popularly known as the age of Information Communication and Technology (ICT). The world experiences rapid advancements and widespread adoption of digital technologies that transform the way information is created, assessed and shared with others. It influences all aspects of life—education, finance, tourism, shopping, work, entertainment, social relationships, etc. At the same time, democratic institutions are largely untouched by successive waves of new technology, particularly in the Global South. We still witness debates requiring speakers to be physically present, and there is little use of digital information and data sharing during parliamentary sessions. Many argue that there is a huge gap between how citizen go about their daily lives and how politics and democracy are carried out. In response, it is argued that digital technologies are the answer, and that they alone can encourage greater participation, better decisions, and more trust. The advocates believe that digital democracy can achieve deeper and broader participation. No doubt, new technologies might make democracy more representative by providing new opportunities for people to participate. New digital tools will make it easier to engage a new or a broader range of participants that could provide new insights and thereby improve the quality of decision-making by the parliaments (or assemblies), political parties and governments. At the same time, the reality is that not everybody can access the internet, maybe due to a lack of digital skills or unavailability of internet service (24 x 7 x 365). There is a ‘digital divide’ and ‘digital inequality’ in the world. This is one of the greatest challenges to the Digital Democracy in the periphery. In the above context, the paper aims to study the idea of digital democracy and its practices in the periphery.

Keywords: Digital Democracy, Digital Divide, Participation, Parliament & Periphery.

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### **Digital Repression, Belonging, and Resistance in Manipur – Queer and Marginalized Communities Navigating Internet Shutdowns During Conflict**

Kumam Davidson Singh

*Founder, Matai Society, Manipur*

This paper examines how state-imposed internet shutdowns during Manipur’s 2023 ethnic conflict disproportionately impacted queer, trans, and other marginalized

communities who rely on digital spaces for survival, solidarity, and resistance. Amid violence that displaced 60,000 and killed over 200, authorities not only enforced an internet blackout but compelled users to sign coercive “undertakings” - paying extra fees (up to Rs. 3000) while surrendering rights to “controversial” speech or VPN use. This institutionalized digital surveillance particularly targeted communities already existing at society’s margins.

For queer and trans individuals who often find belonging in chosen families and online safe spaces due to family rejection and social discrimination, the shutdown severed vital lifelines. Organizations like the Matai Society, which supports Manipur’s LGBTQ+ communities, witnessed how the ban abruptly collapsed digital support systems that provided emotional refuge, crisis resources, and political solidarity. The internet’s disappearance forced many back into physical isolation or unsafe domestic situations, compounding the trauma of ongoing ethnic violence.

The psychological impact extended beyond access - the mandatory “undertaking” created pervasive self-censorship, with the constant threat of surveillance poisoning even private digital communications. Yet these communities demonstrated remarkable resilience, developing covert networks using brief connectivity windows, encrypted offline file-sharing. Some rebuilt connections through oral networks and underground queer spaces, while others exploited geographical variations in enforcement to maintain fragile digital lifelines.

This case reveals how digital repression weaponizes belonging itself, attacking the very spaces where marginalized communities construct identity and resistance. It highlights the internet’s dual role as both sanctuary and battleground, where struggles over connectivity become struggles over the right to exist. The study contributes to critical discussions on digital rights, arguing that internet access constitutes a fundamental dimension of modern survival for queer and other marginalized populations in conflict zones.

Author Bio: Founder of Matai Society, Davidson has a decade of transformative queer activism and LGBTQIA advocacy, championing indigenous livelihoods, psycho-social health, and trauma-informed interventions in conflict zones. Expertise in digital storytelling and community building across Northeast India and Delhi, he has collaborated with global institutions like the University of Sussex, University of California, and Mariwala Health Initiative on pioneering research into HIV, mental health, and LGBTQIA lives. Additionally, published ethnographic, research, and creative



## **Women in the Digital Era: A Case Study of Tribal Women in Tripura**

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The digital revolution has reshaped access to information, communication, and economic opportunities globally. However, the benefits of digital technologies have not been equitably distributed, particularly among marginalized groups such as tribal women in Northeast India. This paper explores the intersection of gender, technology, and tribal identity in the context of Tripura, focusing on the challenges and emerging opportunities for tribal women in the digital era. Through a mixed-methods case study approach involving field interviews, secondary data, and digital literacy assessments, the study highlights digital exclusion, cultural barriers, and infrastructural gaps. Yet, it also points to grassroots innovation, digital entrepreneurship, and government interventions as pathways to empowerment.

Keywords: Digital divide, tribal women, digital literacy, Tripura, women empowerment, ICT, Northeast India

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## **Internet Shutdowns, an Easy Tactic of Government: Human Rights**

### **Violations and the UN Charter**

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While internet shutdowns may appear to be an effective strategy for suppressing protests and maintaining order in the short term, they fundamentally infringe upon the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and the right to access information. These rights are enshrined in Article 19(1)a of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various United Nations resolutions that guarantee the protection of these freedoms. The implications of these shutdowns extend far beyond the immediate suppression of dissent, raising serious concerns about the long-term impact on

democratic values and citizen engagement. This paper aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the human rights issues associated with the increasing prevalence of internet shutdowns, with a particular focus on the situation in India, specifically in the region of Manipur, as well as a broader global perspective. The study will delve into the various ways in which these shutdowns affect individuals and communities, examining the impact on their ability to exercise their rights and participate in public discourse. The imposition of preventive internet shutdowns by Indian authorities has become a disturbing trend, disrupting the daily lives of ordinary citizens without any conclusive evidence that they are effective in restoring peace and stability. Furthermore, these shutdowns severely impede access to essential information, particularly during times of crisis and emergencies, when access to timely and accurate information is most critical for the safety and well-being of the population.

Keyword: Internet shutdown, human rights, violation, freedom, Manipur

### **Reframing Inter-Community Conflict in Manipur: Digital Media, Insurgency, and the Politics of Elite Contestation**

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This paper critically examines the protracted conflict in Manipur as a digitally mediated struggle for power, legitimacy, and ideological control, driven not by primordial ethnic antagonism but by elite contestation and strategic narrative construction. Drawing on elite theory, postcolonial critique, and critical digital media studies, it argues that political violence in Manipur is not spontaneous but orchestrated by competing elite actors—politicians, insurgent leaders, ethnic entrepreneurs, and civil society gatekeepers—who mobilize sub-nationalist ideologies and control public discourse through digital infrastructures. Digital media platforms—particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and X—serve as algorithmically curated spaces of discursive warfare, where emotionally charged content, disinformation, and narrative monopolies reinforce polarized identities and simulate popular consensus. Meitei elites deploy digital media not to assert new forms of dominance but to maintain the territorial status quo of Manipur, framing demands for political reorganization as existential threats to state sovereignty. Conversely, Kuki-Zo elites leverage digital media to project narratives of victimhood, persecution, and historical injustice, drawing on humanitarian

vocabularies and transnational support networks to legitimize their claims to territorial autonomy. These antagonistic digital strategies create epistemic silos, marginalize dissenting voices within communities, and foreclose the possibility of pluralist dialogue. The paper calls for a shift from ethnicist to power-centered frameworks of analysis and advocates epistemic justice, algorithmic accountability, and inclusive institutional reform as essential foundations for a sustainable and democratic peace in Manipur.

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**The Double-Edged Web: Internet, Identity, and Fragility of  
Democracy in Northeast India**

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Rizwan Baig

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This article critically examines the double-edged impact of social media on democracy and identity politics in Northeast India, a region distinguished by its complex ethnic landscape, unique governance frameworks, and special constitutional provisions designed to protect diversity and local autonomy. While these legal safeguards aim to preserve cultural autonomy, they also contribute to fragmented governance and uneven digital infrastructure, complicating the region's engagement with digital technologies. Social media platforms, though empowering marginalized voices and fostering civic participation, have simultaneously facilitated the rapid spread of hate speech, misinformation, and identity-based polarization. Drawing on concepts such as groupthink, echo chambers, and algorithmic bias, the article exposes how digital architectures reinforce informational silos and foster homogeneity, thereby eroding deliberative dialogue and revealing the vulnerabilities of democratic processes in creating and deepening societal divisions. By examining recent regional developments, the discussion demonstrates how online polarization frequently spills into offline tensions- even within frameworks designed to protect diversity and autonomy- further highlighting the fragility of democracy in the face of digital transformation. Challenging the assumption that digital democratization is inherently inclusive, the discussion argues that entrenched social hierarchies and institutional weaknesses fundamentally shape the outcomes of digital engagement. The article concludes with recommendations for digital governance policies tailored to the Northeast's unique context, emphasizing the need for localized regulation, algorithmic transparency, and inclusive digital literacy



initiatives to strengthen democratic resilience and pluralism.

Keywords: Social media, democracy, identity politics, Northeast India, digital infrastructure, algorithmic bias, echo chambers, online polarization, digital governance

### What's wrong with Identity Politics?

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Way back in 1882, Ernest Renan felt it significant to discuss what nation was in actuality. He felt it critical to re-pose the question after having witnessed the implications of the French revolution in 1789. In an age that is presumably celebrated as 'post-colonial', interrogating identarian bifurcation of jus soli - political membership - into ethnicity, tribe, secluded land & religiosity, becomes a pertinent epistemic site of enquiry. Voicing up identarian enclosures as absolute, generic, and given often strategically employs colonial administrative and anthropological lenses. The snow bowling tension embedded in identarian politics is its inability to provide a stable alternative to the Westphallian state model. Land, culture, economy, capital, dependency, and underdevelopment when interpreted only through the prism of secluded identities, not only the unseen structural issues but also the discourage multitude of solidarities.

Francis Fukuyama endorses the natural human tendency to strive for identity recognition. Fukuyama, however, argues that identity politics ultimately undermines social cohesion due to secluded regimentation. Fukuyama sees identity as a powerful force but recommends its usage with riders as it is capable of producing both positive and negative dividends. In the words of Herbert Marcuse, capitalism ultimately makes a society one-dimensional as they get entangled in a web of consumerism culture. Likewise, identarian politics makes communities one-dimensional and antithetical to hybridities: of social transaction and democratization of customary institutions. The paper, thus, seeks to repose the question of what is the nature of identity politics and what has gone wrong with it! An assessment of the spectre of identities may help in unraveling the problematic convergence of identities into a grandeur of enclosed legislations, homelands and territorialities. One-dimensional maneuvering of identities may carry the potential to bifurcate social solidarities and democratic churnings as it relegates normative political avenues of change and conflict resolution which Renan identifies as fountains of 'spiritual principles' of (nations) identities as it can durably



pre-empt weaponisation of identities and mundane public sphere. Larger chunk of identarian epistemology relies on colonial institutional legacies, referrals and binaries such as the ‘hills & valleys’, ‘upland and lowland’, ‘tribe & non-tribes’, ‘old and new’, etc. The pitfalls of such enclosed politics are far reaching often strategically denying class affinities and cultural moorings. The question that shall continue to resonate is have the identity politics wronged identities! Apparently, yes.

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### **Manipuri Digital Music Albums as a Medium in Fostering Communities’**

#### **Harmony in Northeast India**

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Generally, music is a powerful medium through which individuals and communities can express themselves. At the same time, the role of music as a medium for social cohesion can be seen in many parts of the world, and it has emerged to promote political and social relations among communities and nations. With the advent of digitization, the flows of cultural enterprises have gone even faster than ever, and have witnessed global success of K-pop and J-pop in the last few decades. It demonstrates how music can contribute as a ‘soft power’ in shaping socio-cultural relations.

Centuries ago, Machiavelli advised to the Italian princes that ‘to be feared is more important than to be loved’. But, with the dawn of the 21st century, the notion of power has also been changing, and ‘to be loved’ is more everlasting especially when knowledge becomes non-monopoly. Here, the role of music plays an important role in building ‘to be loved’.

In the context of Manipur and the Northeast, a medium which can rely upon in fostering inter-community relations is music. Despite political waves and ripples, Manipuri digital music albums are viewed widely in the region and beyond. In ‘YouTube’ some songs have above 20 million viewers with positive comments cutting across community barrier. The resurgence of Manipuri folk music in the last decade has also gone widely through modern digital platforms, and it represents a distinct musical genre in the world of music, and it is well received. Furthermore, inter-community collaborative musical projects and performances help in facilitating cross-cultural understanding and dialogue. However, most importantly while engaging in music as a medium of diplomacy, one must be mindful with enough sensitivities in the substance.

Key Words: Digitization, Soft Power and Diplomacy

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**Internet and Digital Media, Conflicts and Shutdowns, and Sustainable Peace,  
Democracy & Development**

Anirban Sarma

*Director of the Digital Societies Initiative*

*Observer Research Foundation*

This opening intervention will act as a *scene-setter*, focusing on the growing role the internet and digital media are playing in shaping narratives and governance outcomes in India's northeast. Despite national advancements in digital connectivity, the region continues to face persistent infrastructure gaps, with uneven mobile and broadband access. These disparities impact how communities engage with information and with each other. At the same time, there is a need to go beyond infrastructure provision to improvements in access, services, and digital skills.

The talk will also examine how the growth of social media use and the rise of online activism are intensifying the spread of misinformation and disinformation, often fuelling identity-based conflicts and polarization. State responses to these phenomena sometimes take the form of extended internet shutdowns, leading to speculation about patterns of digital control that undermine constitutional freedoms and weaken public trust. These trends will be offset against possible peacebuilding measures, and steps to counter disinformation – that are both tech-based and awareness-based (such as initiatives to strengthen media and information literacy).

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**Digital Societies, Conflicts, and Reconciliation  
(Governing the Internet) and Digital Peace Building**

Anirban Sarma

*Director of the Digital Societies Initiative*

*Observer Research Foundation*

While the earlier interventions focused more on context-setting, the emphasis in this closing session will be on *solutions* and the *way forward*. Recommendations will be made for trying to address infrastructural deficits, strengthen connectivity, and resolve access issues. The intervention will also look into potential measures for addressing the growing threat of online disinformation and the real-world conflicts

resulting from them; and discuss subthemes such as the uses/limitations of AI-based content moderation tools.

The discussion of how the Internet ought to be governed will extend to the socio-economic impacts of Internet shutdowns, and look at possible alternatives drawing from good practices and practical experiences from other regions. These are important, as shutdowns have especially damaging socio-economic consequences in regions that are relatively underdeveloped. Finally, the role of youth as key stakeholders in digital development and peacebuilding will be discussed, as part of efforts to build more resilient and inclusive digital ecosystems in northeast India.

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**Weaponizing Connectivity: Internet Shutdowns as a Tool of  
State Control in Conflicts Zones**

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&

Dr. Likhase Sangthm

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With a more and more globalized world, use of the internet is no longer a privilege but a basic right that is the foundation for freedom of expression, access to information, and active citizenship. Yet, in war-torn areas, internet shutdowns are state-imposed tools of control that have become a strong tool under the pretext of national security or public order. This content analyzes critically the strategic application of internet shutdowns by governments in conflict zones, unveiling how the use of internet shutdowns is a mechanism that is used to silence people, cover up their violation of human rights, and control the information flow. Based on few case studies of national and international, the paper investigates the political motives of digital blackouts and their long-term implications for civilian populations, media transparency, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding efforts. It contends that instead of augmenting security, these shutdowns worsen instability, aggravate mistrust between citizens and the state, and thwart conflict resolution. The article also interacts with global legal frameworks and discourses of digital rights, raising concern regarding the legitimacy and proportionality

of such shutdowns against the background of international human rights obligations. In conclusion, the study invokes a reconsideration of internet governance policies in war zones and suggests the implementation of international accountability measures to forestall the abuse of digital infrastructure for controlling people in an authoritarian manner.

Keywords: Internet Shutdowns, State Control, Digital Rights, Freedom of Expression, Human Rights, Peacebuilding, Surveillance, Authoritarianism.

### **Bridging the Digital Divide:**

### **Social Media, Narrative Framing, and Peace-Building in Northeast India**

Dr Samir Talati

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Northeast India, characterised by high ethnic diversity and historical and socio-political complexities, has witnessed a proliferation of digital technologies in the past decade, engendering complex dynamics that have both intensified localized conflicts through amplified digital rhetoric and fostered innovative mechanisms for peace and reconciliation. The widespread reach of digital media has revolutionized the way conflict and peace narratives are constructed and disseminated, thus simultaneously reinforcing both by shaping public discourse through selective framing and representation. ‘Framing’ is selective highlighting of certain aspects through language, imagery, and emphasis. ‘Representation’ is the way groups, cultures, and events are portrayed. While contentious framings – characterized by polarizing language, selective reporting, and amplification of divisive identities – tend to exacerbate historical grievances and deepen mistrust among communities, inclusive narratives, built on shared cultural values have fostered understanding and empathy, thereby paving avenues for peace initiatives. This paper, while acknowledging the inevitable transformative role of social media, calls for making the right narrative choices through framing and representation. The discourse presented in social media has immense potential to construct the social world while forging and transforming the very frameworks through which we perceive and inhabit that world. For example, while some social media framing of incidents like the murder of Raja Raghuvanshi or the conflict in Manipur has been around sensational, emotionally charged headlines and imagery, in others, the framing and representation have acted as counter-narrative to the divisive motives and propaganda that seek to mitigate polarisation and cultivate spaces for dialogue and reconciliation. The social media coverage of the candle-lit prayer gathering for Raghvanshi is a case in point.

Using such examples, this paper examines how the strategic framing and representation of narratives can shift digital conversations toward peace-building. By analyzing posts that foreground unity, shared cultural heritage, and reconciliation, the paper illustrates the power of language and imagery in reconfiguring perceptions and mitigating conflict and underscores how carefully constructed digital narratives challenge entrenched divisive frames and also inspire collective aspirations for a more harmonious future.

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### **The New Media and Dalits Experiences**

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The new media provide much freedom and flexibility than the mainstream media to generate and disseminate ideas. The excluded communities and groups all over the world realized the scopes, opportunities and possibilities of new media and they started using them to express their experiences, thoughts, ideas and concepts. It was in the 1970s that the New Media emerged, mainly fuelled by the growth in the internet, posing a challenge to existing newspapers, magazines and television in the print form. In the second wave and with globalization, new media digitization and convergence of media changed the scenario. User generated content, interactivity; audience participation and flexibility are the major features of the internet and new media today. Many believe today that the new media is liberating, democratizing, and empowering citizens, promoting egalitarianism and tolerance.

Dalits all through the history have struggled for space in media. New media has come as a new found platform for them to express their pain in the world and also for developing their own perspectives on important issues. Dalit's writing blogs and create websites and express their views and thoughts to the public. Web portals such as Savari and Round Table India try to understand how Dalits are using new media for their emancipation. Savari is the women's web portal exclusively run by Adivasi, Bahujan and Dalit women. Roundtable India is the web portal of the Ambedkarite movement. The portal offers articles related about Dalit lives with the picture images through one can read India's history of caste based discrimination. These portals represent new perspectives for Dalit studies and turned to be a larger platform for young Dalit scholars and teachers.

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# SECTION B



## **Mapping Democratic Decentralization and Digital Inclusion in Assam**

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Vikas Tripathi

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India has been rapidly growing towards digitalisation, and it has achieved huge success in this process of digitalisation. This digital transformation has remarkable impact on the governance, especially on the local governance, which helps the government to reach out to those people who are marginalised and are living in remote areas. Focusing on Assam's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the study analyses the intersection of democratic decentralisation and digitalisation, and how digital inclusion strengthens democratic decentralisation through responsive, equitable and transparent governance. Drawing on primary data from government statistical reports, digital governance portals such as eGramSwaraj, Panchayat & Rural Development, the study reveals that digital integration acts as a catalyst for decentralisation. Through a detailed analysis, the research demonstrates that these technologies not only improve access to essential public services but also empower local governance bodies by enhancing their capacity and autonomy, thereby making democratic decentralisation more effective. The study suggest that government, by eliminating digital illiteracy through raising awareness among the people at the grassroots level can effectively reach and empower grassroots community , which in turn leads to greater participation.

Keywords: Democratic Decentralization, Digital Inclusion, E-governance, Panchayati Raj Institution, Assam

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## **Digital Means to Cultural Continuity: An Explorative Study on Community Led Online Initiatives Among the Toto Tribe**

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&

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Advent of digital media has expressively transformed the ways in which the indigenous communities promote their cultural continuity and they are



increasingly harnessing the digital tools to combat the cultural erosion, safeguarding their languages, traditional practices, against the pressure of modernity. This explorative study examines the phenomenon through the lens of community-led online initiatives among the Toto tribe of West Bengal, India. Toto tribe is one of the critically endangered indigenous groups facing severe threats to their unique cultural heritage. This study explores how the grassroots digital platforms like social media groups initiated and managed by Toto members can contribute to cultural continuity and also critically analyze the objectives and perceived effectiveness of these interventions. The research employs the qualitative, participatory approach design with digital ethnography methods (offline in-depth interviews and online observation) grounded in the principles of indigenous data sovereignty and community agency. This approach prioritizes the Toto people self-determination, ensuring the research process aligns with the community values and center the Toto voices in understanding their own digital initiatives. This research mainly highlights the indigenous digital sovereignty, contrasting the externally driven preservation models and also offers the practical, cultural resonant strategies for safeguarding the heritage of vulnerable groups, with transferable lessons for other indigenous communities. By contributing to global discourse on indigenous digital futures, the study underscores the interplay between technology, cultural continuity and self-determination, illuminating the sustainable digital pathways for cultural survival.

Keywords: Toto tribe, community, participatory, cultural continuity, Digital, ethnography, self-determination

### **Regimes of Truth? Internet, Conflicts and the role of Intellectuals**

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The proliferation and easy access to internet in this era has significantly altered the dynamics of social relationships. Of this, a central concern relates to how the internet and especially social media relates to conflicts. In this paper, I argue, using the Foucauldian concept of “regimes of truth”, that the perpetration of internet coupled with digital-technological tools and the advent of artificial intelligence have led to the emergence of “regimes of truth” where “truth” is not objectively determined, but socially and subjectively constructed through mechanisms of power and legitimation. In this regard, this paper also highlights the necessary role of public intellectuals in “participating” and consequently “purifying” such regimes of truth, aimed towards an eventual sublation (in the Hegelian sense of *Aufheben*) and consequent realization of

the “Absolute Truth”, while negating what is “untruth” or maya. In doing so, the paper also argues, from a Gramscian position, that this role is inherently paradoxical for the intellectual’s truth itself is constituted by the discourses in motion and the regime to which he belongs.

Keywords: Internet, Conflict, Regimes of Truth, Intellectual, Absolute Truth.

### **Digital Governance for Sustainable Peace**

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The digital world is deeply seeped into our societies affecting our everyday lives and bringing about a socio-technological imaginary. In this current context the paper proposes a strong framework for advancing sustainable peace through digital governance, emphasizing partnerships for digital peace, digital inclusion, and the empowerment of marginalized voices. It is observed that during peace time the utility or ethical question about digitalization is raised and even more so during time of conflict. Conflict situation often face eroded trust, fragmented governance, and exclusion of vulnerable populations. Digital technologies, including blockchain for transparent aid distribution, internet and mobile platforms for civic engagement, offer innovative solutions to rebuild trust and strengthen democratic processes. However, technology are tools which can be misuse as well to exacerbate polarization and undermine democracy. This paper will explore how strategic digital governance can mitigate risks and dampens hostile situations meanwhile emphasizing on the need to amplify marginalized voices, fostering inclusive dialogue, and supporting post-conflict reconstruction. The paper attempts to align with the broader goals of SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions. It will also examine partnerships between governments, tech firms, and civil society to align with SDG 17’s call for collaborative innovation. It will also address key challenges such as ensuring equitable access to technology, safeguarding data privacy, digital literacy, and countering digital authoritarianism. The internet’s dual role—as a tool for trust-building through transparent communication and a battleground for misinformation—will be critically assessed. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, the study integrates insights from peace studies, governance, and technology policy. It aims to propose actionable policy recommendations for stakeholders to harness digital tools for sustainable peace while safeguarding democratic integrity.

### **Information as a New Weapon in Modern Conflicts/Wars: An Assessment**

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In the globalized age and digitalized world, just like the ‘data is the new oil in the contemporary global politics’, the information, a new tool to wage a conflict/war. With the increasing share of information consciously or unconsciously, there has been a rampant weaponisation of social media to set different narratives. In fact, the most sophisticated and sharpest weapon now seems to be ‘the information’ by replacing all types of conventional weapons to fight a war or conflict. This new emerging weapon can move faster and spread like a wildfire from one person to another. Besides, in a rapidly evolving warfare, this new weapon blurs the line between the military and civilian. Myriad stakeholders also build different narratives and exploit the social media as a platform to share the information and reach to the targeted audience across the globe. This proposed paper aims to address the emerging role of information as a tool in the changing character of modern conflict, its potential challenges, and further analyses its implications in the context of who be the winners or losers.

Keywords: Information, Social Media, Conflict/War, Weapon, Narrative

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### **Democratic Elections and Social Media in India**

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This paper explores how social media is influencing democratic elections in India. With a growing number of people using the internet, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become central to political communication. Politicians and parties now use these platforms to reach voters directly. Election campaigns have become faster, more interactive, and more personal. At the same time, social media gives citizens a space to share views, support causes, and stay informed. While social media has opened up new ways for people to engage with democracy, it has also created new problems. Misinformation, fake news, and hate speech have increased, especially during elections. Political parties use data and algorithms to target specific

voters. This can lead to echo chambers, where people only see content that matches their views. Sometimes, these strategies are used to spread fear or create division. The use of trolls, bots, and misleading posts has also raised serious concerns about fairness.

The paper takes examples from the national elections held in 2014, 2019, and 2024. It looks at how political parties have changed their methods and how voters are reacting to content they see online. It also studies the role of digital media in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes.

This paper further discusses the role of institutions like the Election Commission and the courts in responding to these challenges. It highlights the need for clear rules, more responsible action by technology companies, and better digital literacy among the public. The study shows that while social media can strengthen democracy by increasing participation, it can also weaken it if not used responsibly. A balanced and fair use of digital tools is essential to protect the integrity of elections in India.

Keywords: Social media, Democratic elections, India, Political communication, Digital campaigning, Misinformation, Voter behaviour, Electoral integrity, Echo chambers, Data targeting, Fake news, Election Commission, Digital literacy, Political polarization, online public opinion

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## **The Role of Misinformation and Hate Speech in Fueling Conflict: A Study of Social Media's Influence on Social Disruption**

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**M**isinformation and hate speech on social media have emerged as significant catalysts of social disruption and conflict in the past decade. This paper examines how false or incendiary content disseminated via platforms like Facebook, Twitter (X), and WhatsApp can fuel polarization, inter-group tensions, and violence. The paper synthesizes findings from recent case studies across the globe – including ethnic violence in Myanmar and Ethiopia, communal riots in South Asia, and political unrest

in the United States – to illustrate the mechanisms by which online misinformation and hate speech translate into real-world conflict. Social media accelerates the spread of false narratives and extremist rhetoric, often reinforcing echo chambers that exacerbate social divisions. The rapid, unregulated propagation of dangerous content has been linked to mob violence, ethnic cleansing, and political insurrections in multiple contexts. In response, governments, tech companies, and civil society have struggled to design effective countermeasures that balance curbing harmful speech with protecting freedom of expression. This paper discusses platform-specific dynamics (e.g., Facebook’s algorithms, WhatsApp’s private messaging) and highlights both the successes and limitations of current moderation and policy interventions. The paper concludes with recommendations for a multi-pronged approach – including stronger content moderation, targeted regulations, digital literacy initiatives, and cross-sector collaboration – to mitigate the conflict-inducing impact of online misinformation and hate speech.

Keywords: Misinformation; Hate Speech; Social Media; Conflict; Violence; Polarization; Content Moderation; Policy

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**Voices From the Margins: Youth and Women in Digital Peace  
Building Amid Conflict in Manipur**

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This review explores the evolving role of youth and women in digital peacebuilding within the conflict-prone state of Manipur in Northeast India. Situated at the intersection of ethnic tensions, insurgency, and state violence, Manipur presents a complex backdrop where digital tools are increasingly leveraged for peace-oriented engagement. The review synthesizes academic and grey literature to examine how

young people and women utilize social media platforms, digital storytelling, and online campaigns to promote dialogue, challenge dominant narratives, and advocate for justice and reconciliation. It highlights both the potential and limitations of digital peace building in the region—acknowledging structural barriers such as digital divides, surveillance, gendered online harassment, and limited policy support. Particular attention is given to the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, and digital access, and how these shape participation in peace processes. The review concludes by identifying key research gaps and recommending inclusive, context-sensitive frameworks to strengthen the digital peace building ecosystem in Manipur.

Keywords: Manipur, digital peace building, youth, women, conflict, Northeast India, social media, gender, inclusion

### **Impact of Digital technologies on development in Manipur**

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This paper explores the economic implication of the digital technologies on development in Manipur, a peripheral state that is characterized by volatile socio-political dynamics. Although some state-wise digital schemes have gathered momentum in the region, their real role in terms of growth, job creation, and service to the people of Manipur are fully not yet analysed. This study estimates the sectoral benefits, pinpoints regional differences, and critically appraises the cost of digital disruption, especially frequent internet shutdowns in the state. The results indicate that the service sector which has been boosted by the adoption of ICT has continued to grow to exceed 64 percent of the GSDP of the state. Social media and mobile payment systems have facilitated the growth of digital entrepreneurship particularly among young and female population. The effectiveness of government e-services has been increased, and it has more than 3,000 Common Services Centres which are found even in the remote areas. Nonetheless, such gains are uneven across the board as on-line connectivity in the hill region is low and women in tribal districts are more technology deprived. The paper also expresses the economic value of the continual internet outages in economic showing

the vulnerability of its reliance in political games. Notwithstanding the potential of infrastructure and young population, Manipur digital economy is bound to poor policy coordination, poor digital literacy as well as infrastructural asymmetry. This paper also suggests some policy recommendations aim at fair access to the digital world, protection against network blacking by the law and digital literacy in the local language. Once stabilized and empowered, Manipur could act as a precedent of an inclusive digital development in the conflict-prone states and the marginalized territories.

Keywords: Digital Schemes, Internet shutdowns, ICT, GSDP

### **Digital Means to Cultural Continuity: An Explorative Study on Community Led Online Initiatives Among the Toto Tribe**

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**A**dvent of digital media has expressively transformed the ways in which the indigenous communities promote their cultural continuity and they are increasingly harnessing the digital tools to combat the cultural erosion, safeguarding their languages, traditional practices, against the pressure of modernity. This explorative study examines the phenomenon through the lens of community-led online initiatives among the Toto tribe of West Bengal, India. Toto tribe is one of the critically endangered indigenous groups facing severe threats to their unique cultural heritage. This study explores how the grassroots digital platforms like social media groups initiated and managed by Toto members can contribute to cultural continuity and also critically analyze the objectives and perceived effectiveness of these interventions. The research employs the qualitative, participatory approach design with digital ethnography methods (offline in-depth interviews and online observation) grounded in the principles of indigenous data sovereignty and community agency. This approach prioritizes the Toto people self-determination, ensuring the research process aligns with the community values and center the Toto voices in understanding their own digital initiatives. This







inclusion enables women to amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and participate in decision-making. It also empowers entrepreneurship and self-reliance, fostering income generation, local growth, autonomy, and financial independence, essential steps toward achieving India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Keywords: Democracy, Digital Inclusion, Marginalised, Viksit Bharat, Women's Empowerment.

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**Intra-Community Cultural Heterogeneity in the age of social media-A study on Manipuri Women of Tripura and Manipur**

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With rapid technological progress, social media has become an integral part of people's everyday routines. The ability of social media to cross geographical boundaries causes a culture change, especially in cultural integration. This research will be carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data used in this research comes from various research results and previous studies that are still relevant. This study holds significantly impacted the inclusion of women and their voices, providing platforms for economic opportunities and empowerment while also presenting challenges like online harassment and gender bias in technology. The study aims to examine how effectively social media is enhancing the visibility and impact of women's voice.

Keywords: Manipur Women, social media, cultural integration, economic opportunities.

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## Asymmetric Digital Access and Conflict Narratives: Internet Shutdowns During the Ongoing Manipur Crisis Since May 2023

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&

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The ongoing crisis in Manipur, which erupted on May 3, 2023, has resulted in widespread violence, mass displacement, and a serious breakdown of civil order. In response to escalating tensions during both the initial and peak phases of the conflict, the state government imposed extensive internet shutdowns as a strategic measure to maintain law and order. These restrictions were justified as necessary to curb the dissemination of provocative content and misinformation, particularly on social media platforms, which were perceived to be fuelling hostility and unrest. However, a critical issue that emerged was the uneven implementation of these internet bans. While internet access was stringently restricted in the valley regions, predominantly inhabited by the Meitei community, reports indicated that certain hill districts, predominantly inhabited by the Kuki community, continued to have intermittent or full internet access. The state government's directive calling for an inquiry into instances of unauthorised internet availability in these hill areas underscores the existence of digital disparity. In light of this framework, the present paper does not seek to favour or criticize any particular group but rather aims to investigate the nature and consequences of digital asymmetry during the Manipur crisis, focusing on how unequal internet access influenced the flow of information, shaped public perception, and deepened inter-community mistrust. Keywords: Internet Shutdown, Digital Asymmetry, Conflict Narratives, State Policy.

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## The role of digital media in election campaigns: A case study of the Assam Assembly Elections, 2021

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By applying digital technology during elections, political parties in India are able to reach the remotest of the voters. An effective election campaigning and efforts from the political parties to mould its self-image in accordance with public expectations may

lead to their winning elections in large margins. In contemporary times the digital media can act as game changer for the political parties. Digital media includes the creation of various audio-video contents and the use of print media to disseminate different propaganda of the political parties to the masses. With the aid of political technology i.e. internet and social media it enables the political leaders to instantly connect with people during election campaigns. It sometimes is cost-effective as the aspiring candidates need not visit every village or town for campaigns. The article would explore how political parties in Assam during the assembly elections of 2021 have transformed their political campaigns through the extensive use of digital media. It will also examine the impact of social media during elections on the voter's behaviour. With the help of case studies from 2021 Assam's legislative assembly elections, the article attempts to understand how social media platforms and mobile applications aid political parties. The study will rely on secondary sources for understanding how digital media influence election campaigns with case studies from Assam.

Keywords: Digital technology, election campaigns, voter's behaviour and political parties.

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# SECTION C



## **The Implications of Growing Internet Access and Social Media Dynamics in Manipur**

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The number of internet connections in India has grown from 25.15 crore in March 2014 to nearly 96.96 crore by June 2024, representing a remarkable growth of 285.53%. A landmark event contributing to this surge was the launch of Reliance Jio's extremely affordable data plans in 2016. This has allowed millions of poorer Indians to access the internet, significantly bridging the gap in internet penetration across the country. Similar to other regions, Reliance Jio has brought about a transformative change in digital connectivity among the people. The purpose of this paper is to provide a preliminary observation of the implications of increasing internet accessibility in the state of Manipur.

The main argument of this paper is that as internet accessibility increases, there has been a rise in the number of active users on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. These platforms have become places for making money, discussing politics, sharing information, and often causing online arguments. The monetization strategies used by apps like Facebook and YouTube have enabled many popular influencers and smaller creators to emerge. Some individuals create anonymous pages and post provocative content to attract likes and comments. This trend has contributed to the spread of sensational content, ultimately resulting in online polarization among internet users. People frequently engage in disputes along ethnic and religious lines.

Moreover, social media has become a venue for moral policing, particularly regarding women's behaviour. It also serves as a primary news source for many, leading individuals to believe almost everything they encounter on Facebook. Unfortunately, misinformation and misguided narratives have become prevalent in social media interactions. In this digital age, it is crucial for individuals to be responsible internet users and not take information at face value.

## Internet Shutdowns in India: Implications for Democratic Governance

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The Internet is one of the essential elements in today's world of 21<sup>st</sup>. The Internet has become an indispensable part of our daily life in the World of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anything happening in our world can be related to the internet, whether it is development, education, marketing, business, healthcare, etc. India is the largest democracy in the world which is known for its diverse culture and tradition. The constitution of India gives fundamental and human rights regarding free speech, freedom of the media, freedom of expression, Right to information, etc. which signifies features of democratic government. But, sometimes, the government ends up deliberately blocking the use of the internet by the citizens to maintain law and order and stop the spread of hate speech in case of an ethnic crisis or any other issues. The problem arises is that India witnessed 84 internet shutdowns in 2024 which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the world. Internet shutdown is an intentional disruption of internet communications for a specific population or within a location for any time of duration of time often to exert control over the flow of information. On this note, this paper is an attempt to explore the impacts of internet shutdown on the common people as well as the student communities of Manipur. The study used both primary and secondary sources. This paper uses a qualitative method based on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The people of Manipur experienced various episodes of internet shutdown as ethnic conflict is still going on. This article talks about the direct and indirect impact of the internet shutdown on the student community of Manipur. The study finds that an Internet shutdown is a direct violation of the right to life and other fundamental rights. It impacts directly and indirectly on healthcare, the economy, business, education, and many other areas. The study recommends that internet shutdowns should be a last resort while keeping in mind the welfare of common people and should be kept minimal.

Keywords- Internet, Shutdown, Manipur, Democracy, Governance

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## **Impact of the Digital India Initiative on the Scheduled Caste Communities in Thanga, Manipur**

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The Digital India Initiative, launched in 2005, aims to bridge the digital divide and provide inclusive access to information and services. It revolutionized the way citizens interact with the government by making services more accessible, transparent, and efficient. It empowered both citizens and officials, enhancing ease of governance across the country. However, its impact on marginalized communities, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs), varies across regions. This paper examines the impact of the Digital India Initiative on the SC communities i.e. Lois in Thanga, a remote island on Loktak Lake in Manipur. Through qualitative analysis, field observations and review of the existing digital infrastructure and policies, this study highlights the achievements, limitations and challenges faced by SCs in accessing digital services and propose recommendations for inclusive digital empowerment.

Keywords: Digital India, Scheduled Castes, Thanga, Manipur, digital literacy, digital divide, rural development

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## **An imperative for digital citizenship in Manipur**

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The emergence of digital citizenship as a formal concept is one that has emerged alongside the rise of internet, social media and so on. While there are more than one definition for what a digital citizenship is, it can be described as one that refers to the responsible, ethical, and informed use of digital technologies by an individual as a member of the online global community. Digital citizenship is an imperative in a digital age where individuals spent more and more time on online platforms and are increasingly influenced by it. In a digital world where the lines between the personal and public domain is blurred it is necessary to understand the ethical and legal rules. This article aims to study the importance of digital citizenship, the need for awareness of what it is to be a digital citizen in the context of Manipur, the need for digital literacy as use of social media increases it is important to be able to more than simply know how to use technology, to be able to critically evaluate the information found and understand



the nuances of digital communication, responsible participation by individuals on online platforms by engaging in constructive conversation, civic participation in digital platforms to engage in societal issues and participate in public discourse, responsible sharing of information and the ethical use of internet.

Keywords: Digital Citizenship, Digital literacy, Social media.

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### **Internet Shutdown and Democratic Expression: An Analysis in the Context of Social and Political Unrest in Manipur**

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This paper attempts to critically analyze the use of internet shutdowns as a convenient tool to arrest social and political unrest in India, with emphasis on the state of Manipur, particularly in the context of recent episodes of inter-community strife and subsequent socio-political unrest. It analyzes the gap between the right to freedom of speech as enshrined in Article 19(1) of the Indian Constitution and the democratic suppression of free speech in practice through the use of internet shutdowns, enabled by a stretched interpretation of the ‘reasonable restrictions’ clause under Article 19(2). The paper concludes by suggesting that curbing dissent in digital spaces through extreme measures like total internet shutdowns controls unrest only superficially, while the resulting democratic deficit can have far-reaching consequences, such as the erosion of civic empowerment and inclusive citizenship.

Keywords: Internet Shutdowns, Freedom of Speech, Article 19, Manipur Conflict, Digital Rights, Democratic Backsliding

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### **Autonomy as a Pathway to Peace: Assessing the Impact of the Sixth Schedule on Conflict Resolution in Manipur**

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Autonomy can be seen as a right to act upon one’s discretion in certain matters synonymous with independent, synonymous with decentralization and having exclusive powers of legislative, administration and adjudication in specific areas. Autonomy is a tactical means for the diffusion of power from the Centre to the peripheries



strategic engagement, digital literacy, and regulatory frameworks to harness its potential for sustainable peace. Through case studies and theoretical perspectives, the research underscores the importance of responsible digital citizenship and multi-stakeholder collaboration in leveraging social media as a constructive instrument in conflict resolution processes.

Key words: Communication, Conflict resolution, Social media, catalyst, peace building, reconciliation, inclusivity, digital literacy, Sustainable peace, Constructive instrument.

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### **Digital Nationalism in India: Reimagining National Narrative in Digital Age**

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Indian nationalism is changing its nature and narrative with the resurgence of digital media in the political and social spaces of the nation. And with this regard, this proposed paper would highlight the role of digital media and other internet platforms in changing the dynamics of nationalist discourse in India. The main concern of the study is to examine the major characteristics of digital nationalism as occurred in India with wide reach diversification to public and enriching participatory culture. This emerging nationalism in new avatar also comes in as banal nationalism as differing from the traditional close form of nationalist construction. Analysing the Indian scenario, the discussion would address how the state and other non-state actors; civil societies and ordinary citizens device the digital platforms to assert conflicting ideas of the nation. It accompanies both the positive notions; greater reach and participation, stronger sense of belonging, more diverse national narratives, as well as the negative effects; online propaganda and misinformation, fragmentation of social groups, increasing polarization, and digital authoritarianism. It aims to investigate the nature of contemporary nation-building phenomena in India being shaped by digital nationalism, whether in constructing national rhetoric, or intensifying right wing populism. Considering a diverse interdisciplinary approach drawing from political science, media studies, sociology and others, this paper would deconstruct the interplay between digital media and nationalist discourse in India.

Keywords: Nationalism, Digital Media, Digital Nationalism, Indian Nationalism, Participatory Culture, National Narrative, Popular Culture, Digital Age, Misinformation, Digital Authoritarianism.

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## Understanding the Dynamics of Citizen – Administration Relationship through Digital India Campaign: A Reconfiguration

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This paper examines a governance model comprised of three core entities: Administration (representing all state actors with the authority to regulate and coordinate development activities), Citizen (including individuals, non-state actors, and businesses), and Policy (representing the system of rules, regulations, and incentives through which the administration coordinates and regulates citizens). The study builds on Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to highlight this trinity in the governance model. Historically, the relationship between citizens and the administration in India has been shaped by colonial legacies, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited accessibility—especially for rural and marginalized communities. This has led to the *invisibilisation* of poor and marginalized sections in governance processes, creating a long-standing gap between citizens and the state. To address this gap, the Government of India launched the Digital India campaign in 2015. This initiative aims to transform the country into a digitally empowered society by prioritizing citizen participation in governance and policymaking. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, this paper critically explores the evolving relationship between citizens and administration in the 21st century under market-driven governance. It focuses on key initiatives of the Digital India campaign, such as Common Services Centres (CSCs), UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance), MyGov, and the JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile), to examine how they empower citizens. Through this analysis, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how the Digital India campaign is reshaping the dynamics of governance and public service delivery in contemporary India.

Keywords: Governance, citizen- Administration dynamics, common service centre, citizen's empowerment

## Barriers to Digital Inclusion in Hill Districts: A Policy Perspective from Tamenglong District, Manipur

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Information communication technology (ICT) has become essential to our survival and fostering our quality of life. However, there is a growing concern that certain groups, particularly those living in the rural areas, are being left behind. In a time where equity and equality are promoted, social inclusion, consisting of various shoots has become eminent; a part of it is digital inclusion. In the last decade or more, significant efforts have been put in by governments in creating an ecosystem, for e-government in India, and fostering it through policies and infrastructure provision. Significant amount of public money continues to be spent on it. The Gartner group forecasts an increase in e-government related expenditure, by the centre, state and local governments in India combined, to increase nearly 9% from \$7 billion in 2017 to \$8 billion in 2018. In fact, the union (central-government) budget for 2018 alone has earmarked \$1 billion for telecom-infrastructure and another \$483 million for various activities under the Digital India mission. Despite such significant investments, e-government in India still has a long way to go. The recent 2018 e-government survey by United Nations ranked India 96th among the 193 member countries on their e-government development index (EGDI). India's EGDI index score of 0.5669 was marginally above the world average of 0.55; on the other hand, South Korea, the e-government leader in Asia scored 0.9010, quite near the world leader, Denmark's score of 0.9150 (United Nations, 2018).

The transformative potential of e-governance in bridging the gap between the state and its citizens has gained increasing attention in India's governance discourse. However, its success remains uneven, especially in remote tribal regions such as Tamenglong district in Manipur. At the same time, the notion of 'digital divide' has attracted large spectrum of public speculation for its economic, social and political consequences. Studies have revealed that the gap existing between those who have access to ICTs and those who do not have access creates exclusion, threatening social integration and hamper economic growth. In line with the above, this article discusses initiatives taken by government of India towards the access to digital information and the critical role played by numerous nationwide programs in bridging the digital divide from the perspective of North Eastern State of Manipur drawing a study from

the Tamenglong district. The article also focuses on some of the key impediments and barriers to digitization and the need for strong determination, good policy-making and political support in bridging the digital divide in the country.

Keywords: Digital divide, Social inclusion, Digital Inclusion, E-governance, governance, Digital information, Tamenglong district.

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### **Empowering Marginalized Communities Through Digital Platforms:**

#### **A Northeast India Perspective**

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The internet has become a transformative tool in bridging gaps for marginalized communities worldwide, providing a platform for self-expression, economic empowerment, cultural preservation and dissemination. Digital initiatives have amplified underrepresented voices, enabled access to critical services, and fostered inclusivity by dismantling geographical and social barriers. Initiatives such as Internet Saathi and Mobile Vaani have demonstrated how technology can empower rural women, enable grassroots storytelling, and address governance challenges in underserved regions. However, despite this global progress, challenges such as digital illiteracy, limited connectivity, and socio-economic inequalities remain pervasive.

In Northeast India, a region marked by its geographical remoteness and cultural diversity, digital platforms have proven especially impactful in addressing local challenges. Initiatives like Assam's Internet Saathi and Assam Skill Connect have empowered rural women and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by providing them with digital literacy and tools for online marketing, boosting economic participation. Similarly, programs like Cyber Shakti have enhanced cyber security awareness among rural entrepreneurs, ensuring safe digital engagement. The Northeast Internet Governance (NEIG) summit further addresses regional digital needs, promoting inclusive policy-making and governance.

These efforts align with a broader global movement toward leveraging technology for social good while addressing unique regional challenges. This paper argues that region-specific, driven digital initiatives can effectively empower marginalized communities in the Northeast. This enables them to assert their narratives, access opportunities, and

contribute meaningfully to the digital economy. It highlights the potential of expanding such tailored initiatives to foster inclusive growth in similar regions worldwide.

Keywords: Digital empowerment, marginalized communities, digital inclusivity

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### **Internet Shutdowns in India: A Socio-Economic Assessment**

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Since 2012, the Indian government has imposed over 800 internet shutdowns, which means India accounts for the highest number of internet shutdowns more than any other country on this planet. There lie extensive socio-economic damages and significant human costs behind such a high number of digital blackouts in India. Research still hasn't adequately questioned the official efficacy of shutdowns as a security measure or yielded robust alternative policy solutions elsewhere. This paper aims to assess the overall negative impacts of digital blackout on the economy and its people. Motivated by the frequent practices of internet shutdown, this paper proposes to provide a set of proportional actions which can be taken by the government, which are practical, effective and cause less collateral damage. This study employs a descriptive and analytical research type to gain deeper insights into the topic. This study relies on wide range of both primary data ( including official government figures, publications, notices etc.) and secondary data (including online articles, other research paper, online news, books, etc.) and then the collected data is analysed to arrive for an accurate findings regarding the negative impacts of digital blackout. The findings of the study reveal that internet shutdown in any part of the country inflicts severe negative consequences, in which the cons far outweigh the pros. The study further reveals that there is a direct correlation between internet shutdown and significant loss to the economy. Digital blackouts further paralysed direct access to education and essential services, and violate the citizens' fundamental rights to expression and information. The study also recommends various actionable and practical measures which can be taken as an alternative to the internet ban.

Keyword: Internet shutdown, Digital blackout, Socio-Economic, Indian government, Economy

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## **Social Media, Divisive Politics and False Narratives in Manipur**

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&

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Technological revolutions including social media and other digital platforms are reshaping individuals and communities. Such transformations have brought a shift in values, lifestyles and perspectives in the present world. Manipur, a State of India bordering with Myanmar is inhabited by multiple indigenous communities and migrant populations. There have been political and social tensions among various groups over land rights, political representation and separatist identity politics. It is often fuelled by misinformation on social media and other digital platforms. While digital platforms have brought increased communication; they have also made it easier for divisive and false narratives for years in Manipur. Social media and other digital platforms help the decision makers to take real-time feedback and public sentiment analysis. This paper analyses how the social media and other digital platforms amplify divisive politics particularly separatist identity politics by spreading polarizing contents. It examines how these further lead to polarization, politicization, conflicts and even violence. It is argued that there is need to bring constructive dialogues among various stakeholders to resolve the differences and conflicts for peace by leveraging social media and other digital platforms.

Keywords: Social media, Value-system, Divisive politics, Polarization and Dialogues.

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## **Online Radicalization: Restructuring the Socio-Political Aspects of Manipur, India**

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Online Radicalization refers to the process by which individuals become increasingly extreme in their views and behaviours through online interactions. The psychology behind online radicalization is complex and multifaceted, involving various factors that contribute to an individual's radicalization. In this paper, the wave of online radicalization will be discussed and analysed. The paper aims to provide an understanding of internet in

becoming a new form of weapon in shaping the socio- political aspects of a society. The impact of online radicalization has a huge impact in the society in different ways both positive as well as negative. Thus, the concept of online radicalization becoming a threat or aboon for the society will be analysed and how much the new wave affects the people will be observed. The paper will be using primary and secondary sources, personal interactions with media persons, related books and journals, online debates and lectures of selected scholars engaged with the particular area and to understand the depth of the area and its relation with the individual behaviour and reflecting or representing the society made easier in shaping the aspects of individual

Keywords: Individual, Impact, Online radicalization, Manipur, Socio-political, Society

### **Digital Governance for a leading India and its significance in Manipur**

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India is emerging as one of the leading nations in the world in terms of economy, soft power and technology aided by its demographic dividend. The role of digital governance aided by technologies is becoming more and more significant. And hence, the Government of India launched the Digital India programme in 2015 with the aim of digitally empowering the society and her knowledge economy. Digital governance refers to the use of digital and electronic technologies by the government and its agencies to carry out efficient administration and improve decision-making. Among many advantages it offers, mentioned can be made of the following few such as – faster delivery of services and benefits, improving accountability and transparency, enhancing citizen involvement in decision-making, easy accessibility and better tracking of policies and programs. The objective of the paper is to bring out the importance of digital governance for a leading India. This paper will highlight the working and significance of digital governance in three main areas i.e., in social welfare programmes, skill development and education. The paper will also examine the significance and challenges in implementing digital governance, especially in the state Manipur. Since, Manipur is a state having diverse and unique cultures, traditions and ethnicities; effective functioning of digital governance is a much. Understanding what digital governance is and how much it is importance in order to bring a holistic development in modern day society and enhancing good governance is a necessity. It will enhance the awareness of the people and lead towards

a democratic development of the country as a whole. Awareness among citizens for safe digital behaviour is also the need of the hour.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Technology, Good Governance, Development.

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**Twitter as a battleground: Monitoring tweets and  
hashtags related to the violence in Manipur**

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When the violence broke out between the Meiteis and Kuki, Zomi and Hmar groups on 3 May 2023, it quickly shifted to online spaces. Twitter became the battleground between the two warring communities, with massive spikes in Twitter accounts to 'demonise' each side of the divide. At first, Twitter handles from Kuki, Zomi, and Hmar groups were seen to be superior in their information war against Meiteis. Later, the Twitter handles of Meitei became dominant in their information war to suppress the other warring communities. It is observed that the handles, however, were mostly operating outside the state of Manipur since there was frequent internet shutdown in the state. This article monitors the tweets and hashtags of the popular Twitter handles during the violence of both communities. It observes that the tweets and hashtags were imbued with the narratives of majority vs minority, Hindus vs Christians, national security, geopolitics and most importantly, the problems of ethnic insurgency. The observation also finds the involvement of handles from 'mainland India' other than the two ethnic communities through organising 'spaces' with speakers and listeners about the violence. The article also examines the activities of the popular Twitter handles and compares them during the peak of the violence. The observations gathered in this article will be an important source for studying the nature of the violence in the state.

Keywords: Twitter, Hashtags, Tweets, Manipur Violence

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# Decolorization of Grassroot Democracy in India

## Study on the Digital Policy making for Effective Panchayati Raj

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The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), formalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, represent a cornerstone of India's grassroots democracy, aiming to empower rural communities through decentralized governance. However, the vibrancy of this democratic framework has faced “decolorization” due to bureaucratic resistance, inadequate funding, and socio-cultural barriers such as the persistent “Sarpanch Pati” culture, which undermines women's representation despite 49% female participation in PRIs. This study explores the role of digital policymaking in revitalizing effective Panchayati Raj, addressing governance challenges, and fostering participative democracy. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, which emphasizes inclusive dialogue for democratic legitimacy, the study examines how digital platforms can enhance transparency and accountability in PRIs. The e-GramSwaraj portal, launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, exemplifies digital intervention by streamlining decentralized planning and work-based accounting, yet its effectiveness is limited by non-functional internet connectivity and inadequate infrastructure in Gram Panchayats (GPs).

Case studies from Kerala, where 29 functions have been devolved to PRIs, and Rajasthan, which adopted Kerala's model for devolving key sectors like health and education, highlight successful decentralization. Conversely, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar show poor Gram Sabha attendance and exclusion of marginalized groups, reflecting governance gaps. The Manishankar Aiyar Committee's (2012-13) findings underscore the "decentralization of corruption" and weak Gram Sabhas, aligning with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, where elite dominance perpetuates exclusion. Digital policies must address these by enhancing capacity building, as recommended by the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission, and fostering bottom-up governance to align with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Swaraj. This study advocates for robust digital infrastructure, gender-inclusive e-governance, and community-driven social audits to strengthen PRIs, ensuring grassroots democracy regains its democratic vibrancy.

Keywords: Sarpanch Pati, Digital platforms, Decentralized planning, Corruption, Symbolic power

**From Connection to Conflagration: Social Media's Impact on  
Conflict Dynamics in Manipur**

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Social media has significantly reshaped communication landscapes across the globe, including in India's Northeast, particularly in Manipur—a region fraught with ethnic tensions and political unrest. While platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter have enabled broader access to information and alternative narratives, they have also become channels for spreading misinformation, hate speech, and inflammatory content. In times of ethnic clashes and crises, social media has often escalated tensions by amplifying identity-based divisions and provoking real-world violence. This paper explores how digital platforms have been used by both state and non-state actors to construct competing narratives, mobilize support, and shape public perception. It also examines the limitations of current regulatory measures in tackling digital misinformation without compromising freedom of expression. Using case studies and digital ethnography, the study highlights the dual role of social media—as a tool for empowerment and as a trigger for conflict escalation. The paper concludes with recommendations for responsible digital governance, improved media literacy, and conflict-sensitive policies to harness social media's potential for peacebuilding in conflict-prone regions like Manipur.

Keywords: Social media, conflict, ethnic tensions, misinformation, peacebuilding.

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**Digital Authoritarianism and Erosion of civil liberties: A study of the usage of  
digital tools to censor, surveil, suppress and manipulate media in Manipur**

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Digital authoritarianism represents a growing threat to democratic values and civil liberties in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It refers to the strategic use of digital technologies by authoritarian regimes to surveil, repress and manipulate media and populations, often under the guise of maintaining national security or public order. This research

explores the various mechanisms through which digital authoritarianism operates, including internet censorship, mass surveillance, disinformation campaigns, and algorithmic control in Manipur. The study highlights how the government exploit digital infrastructure to curtail dissent, monitor citizen behavior, and consolidate political power. The study also examines the role of private tech companies in enabling state repression, either through compliance or active collaboration. It investigates how digital authoritarian practices are exported to other nations through technology transfers and governance models, contributing to global diffusion of repressive digital norms. The research underscores the complex relationship between technological advancement and authoritarian resilience arguing that the digital tools not only reinforce traditional methods of control but also introduce novel forms of domination. Lastly, it evaluates the responses from civil society, international organizations and democratic states to counteract digital authoritarianism emphasizing the urgent need for normative frameworks and digital rights protections. By critically analyzing these trends, the study contributes to the broader discourse on the future of digital governance, freedom of expression and the preservation of democratic ideals in an increasingly digitized world.

### **Artificial Intelligence and its Expanding Capabilities**

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**I**n a rapidly advancing and digital technology-oriented society, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming a tool for creativity, curiosity, and a handy assistant for many people. It has come to assist in a lot of onerous tasks and is offering us new and unimaginable features. From simple prompts to complex scientific programs, the capabilities and usage of AI are expanding. Amidst these prospects, there is also concern for certain workspace being dominated and gradually replaced by AI. This paper broadly seeks to dive into the ideology behind such advanced technological inventions and a discussion about the impacts they have on general masses, governance, and education.

Keywords: digital technology, Artificial Intelligence, ideology, governance, education

## **The Digital Nexus of Conflict and Identity: Examining the Impact on Manipur's LGBTQ+ Community amidst Ethnic Strife**

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This review paper examines the multifaceted nature of Meitei-Kuki-Zo conflict, the dual role of digital technologies within it, and the compounded vulnerabilities alongside the remarkable resilience of the LGBTQ+ community. The conflict's origins are deeply rooted in historical grievances over land, resources, and political power, exacerbated by divisive state policies and weaponized narratives. Digital platforms, while serving as conduits for misinformation and hate speech that fuel the conflict, have also paradoxically become indispensable lifelines for marginalized communities, particularly the LGBTQ+ population, enabling vital communication, community building, and advocacy amidst severe internet shutdowns and pervasive online harassment. The LGBTQ+ community faces unique challenges, including exacerbated marginalization in displacement, severe mental health crises, and the fracturing of nascent community networks along ethnic lines. Despite these adversities, LGBTQ+ organizations demonstrate significant digital adaptability and agency in leveraging online spaces for support and advocacy. The analysis highlights that simplistic approaches to digital governance in conflict zones, such as blanket internet shutdowns, are fundamentally flawed, often exacerbating the very problems they aim to solve while simultaneously violating human rights and hindering critical humanitarian efforts. Addressing this complex crisis requires multi-pronged approaches that acknowledge the interconnectedness of ethnic conflict, digital dynamics, and the specific needs of marginalized populations, emphasizing the protection of rights and well-being for all affected groups.

Keywords: Meitei, Kuki-Zo Communities, Digital, Conflict, Identity, LGBTQ+ Populations.

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### **Internet Shutdowns and Precarity of Digital Citizenship**

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Governments across the world have used internet shutdowns as a political tactic during conflict situations. The Human Rights Watch (2023) reported that India accounted for 84 shutdowns out of 187 globally. Authorities argue that these shutdowns



are necessary to prevent the escalation of violence caused by rumours circulated on social media. India has recently implemented several digitization policies, especially in relation to government welfare schemes aimed at social protection. As a result, the internet has become essential in ensuring the delivery of social welfare to a significantly vulnerable population. Human Rights Watch (2023) observed several negative impacts of internet shutdowns in India: loss of paid work through government employment schemes like NREGA, disruption in access to the public food distribution system, loss of income for e-governance service centres, reduced access to medical and other emergency services, and loss of revenue for businesses dependent on online transactions. These impacts disproportionately affect the vulnerable populations who rely on digital platforms for accessing social welfare schemes. This paper draws upon published research and articles to examine internet shutdowns as a technique of digital governance. While digital governance is carried out in the digital realm under the unmarked lines of digital sovereignty and control, the burden of restricted internet access often falls heavily on the people. This creates a precarious nature of digital citizenship, wherein access to digitally mediated social and economic rights remains volatile, especially in conflict zones, where authorities frequently impose internet shutdowns to manage rising political and social tensions.

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### **Ethnic Unrest in Manipur: The Unravelling of Communal Harmony (2023-2025)**

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The study of this paper delves into the recent ethnic conflict that has deeply fractured the social and political fabric of Manipur, a northeastern state in India. This ethnic unrest has pitted communities against one another, leading to widespread displacement, violence, and a breakdown of institutional governance. Focusing on the period 2023-2025, the study critically examines the roots, escalation, and implications of the violence primarily between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. It explores how historical grievances, identity politics, land rights, and state policies have collectively intensified ethnic polarization. Special attention is given to the role of social media in shaping narratives, fuelling misinformation, and amplifying divisions. The paper also reflects on the roles played by ethnic based organisations and state responses assessing both their failures and potential pathways for reconciliation. By situating the unravelling



communal harmony, the paper seeks to understand the complexities of coexistence in a multi-ethnic society and proposes a framework for conflict resolution. The findings aim to contribute to policy discourses for inclusive governance and peacebuilding efforts in ethnically sensitive regions.

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### **Social Media Influence in Investment Decisions of Women Investors**

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&

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Social media has become a powerful influence on financial decision-making, particularly among women who are increasingly active in managing personal and household investments. This study explores how platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook affect the investment decisions of women investors in Dimapur, Nagaland.

Using a structured survey of 120 women, the research analyzes patterns in social media usage, trust in online financial content, and resulting investment behavior. Findings indicate that social media plays a critical role in shaping investment preferences, especially among younger, digitally active women. It increases financial awareness but also encourages herd behavior and emotionally influenced decisions.

Women with higher financial literacy showed more critical judgment when evaluating online advice, while others were more likely to follow trends without deeper analysis. The study concludes that while social media is a valuable source of financial exposure, there is an urgent need for digital financial education to promote informed, balanced investment decisions among women.

Keywords: Social Media Influence, Women Investors, Investment Behavior, Financial Literacy

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## Digital Dangers: Misinformation, Fake News, a Threat to Democracy

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Free and easy access to information is very crucial for a healthy democracy. In today's world, traditional media such as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and other publications are no longer the sole means of gathering or acquiring information. The proliferation of the internet (mobile internet) and digital technology (smartphones) has revolutionised communication, enabling citizens to access information anywhere, anytime, and stay informed and updated. However, the internet and digital technology are like a double-edged sword. While on one hand, people were able to access information like never before, on the other hand, it came with the dangers of misinformation and fake news. Today, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Telegram are used not only for entertainment purposes but also as a source of information and a mechanism for rapidly spreading it. It has become a breeding ground for circulating fake news, setting up false narratives, thereby distorting public opinion, posing a grave challenge to democratic governance. This paper aims to examine the dangers of misinformation, fake news, and other similar issues on democratic processes, as well as the challenges in regulating social media without compromising freedom of speech and expression. It also explores the potential solutions and the urgent need to combat the spread of misinformation by educating citizens through digital literacy programs and awareness campaigns on how to identify fake news, verify false information, and use fact-checking techniques.

Keywords: Democracy, social media, fake news, misinformation, digital threats

## Fake News, Hate Speech and Online Polarisation: A Critical Analysis of the Social Media Space in Manipur

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This paper presents a critical sociological analysis of the pervasive phenomena of *fake news*, *hate speech*, and *online polarization* within the social media space of Manipur, a conflict-ridden state in northeast India. Social media platforms—namely

Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter)—have emerged as crucial tools for collective mobilization, enabling both communities to organize protests and share information about their grievances. This has led to *informational cascades* and the formation of *echo chambers*.

The research employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary methodological framework to investigate how digital narratives are weaponized to fuel ethnic tensions, distort realities, and reinforce divisive agendas, prejudice, and animosity within Manipur’s digital sphere. By analyzing social media posts, hashtags, memes, and comments from 2023 to 2025, the paper explores how discourses of exclusion, fear, and moral panic are reproduced and legitimized. Content analysis of social media posts will be conducted to capture the dynamics of online discourse, echo chambers, and community sentiments.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of how digital communication can shape ethnic tensions and normalize hate speech, thereby emphasizing the need for strategies to counter disinformation and promote constructive dialogue. Through this interrogation of digital dynamics, the paper will enhance existing literature in media studies, conflict analysis, and digital ethnography, while offering valuable insights for policymakers and scholars engaged with the socio-political dimensions of digital communication in conflict zones.

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### **An Overview of Digital Transformation in Manipur Rural Development**

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The paper explores how far the people in the rural areas are enabled to access information in the digital platform. The digital India programme enhances citizen of India, digitally empowered to maintain relevance and competitiveness in the digital world. It has improved the e-governance processes promoting transparency and accountability through mandated delivery of government’s services by bridging the rural and urban India divide. The pandemic covid-19 has accelerated the digitalization process in education, health, industries, business and enterprises, government offices and employees using many applications. Role of digitalization in rural development helps in improving living standard in the living standard of people in rural areas. It also fosters the rural connectivity, improving economic development, healthcare accessibility and

educational opportunities. For the convenient of administration, the local stakeholders including individuals, local communities should be trained, equipped for the successful democratic participation at the grass root level. The women and children welfare schemes and benefits are also digitalized to ensure transparency in the digital era. Digital literacy rates have been increased bridging the gender gap through digital platform. Digitalization in Manipur rural areas have multi-dimensions, but in this paper it covers the working of local government such as MNREGS and impacts of digitalization in the rural areas for the development. It has many benefits and provides opportunities to the people in the rural areas. Many reforms have made in the administration and empowering the local government for the successful democracy in the democratic approach world.

Key words: e-governance, digital transformation, rural areas, digital literacy

### **Role of Media and Women Empowerment**

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Media have always played an important role in shaping the social life. It constitutes a big part in our life. Media have unwittingly affected and influence the thinking and behavior of the society. As there are trends in the use of media, people spend more time with media than any single activity. As a new tool, weapon or the platform to interacts the social life, media can be a powerful agent of oppression as well as a potential force of change. It can either hinder or advance women's inclusion to the development process. This paper explore media portrayal of women and It also examines the role of media to foster women empowerment. Women as a social category seems to portray at all in traditional role in media- homemaker, mother. They are shown to be define in terms of their relationship with men- women dependent on men, and their incapable to live of their own, the need of the guidance from the men. The paper argued that If women portray in this way societal attitudes and women expectation for themselves will necessarily confine to these roles. Moreover, women knowledge about the media and access to and control over the various form of medias are still limited. There is virtual gap between the gender to the use of media. if women expose more to media, there will be some positive outcome. As media can be used as a medium to advocate the gender equality and status of women, it offers the space to learn, educate and share voice on

anything or everything. It provides the platform to discuss women issues and challenge, communicate, voice their opinion.

Keywords: Women, media, inclusion, empowerment

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### **The Role and Impact of Social Media in Manipur Mayhem**

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In today's world, social media has completely revolutionized the way information flows, and people communicate with each other. Social media itself seems to have become quite popular. Interestingly, it becomes the breadth of life to everybody nowadays. It weaves a new medium where information flows like a digital river at a very fast and unprecedented speed. In fact, social media has expanded and made the scope of traditional media more complex in significant ways. It greatly shapes and influences the way people understand and engage with the world. This fact appears truer and more significant in times of crisis and conflict. Crisis and conflict often involve confusion, anxiety, fear, hopelessness and failure of usual coping mechanisms. This is also when and where the usage of social media assumes greater relevance than ever. Politically speaking, Manipur is truly no stranger to violence and conflicts. Since May 3, 2023, the state of Manipur has been engulfed by unprecedented crimes of violence. Many people have lost their precious lives and thousands of them have become homeless and taken refuge in 'relief camps'. It is argued that in the wake of the crisis in Manipur, propaganda has been floated around through the platform of social media extensively and it has greatly fuelled the ethnic polarisation and friction in unexpectedly greater levels. This has, in turn, greatly widened the divide between warring ethnic communities. In view of several untoward happenings that have taken place in Manipur, the study of the role and impact of social media in informing and influencing people's perceptions of the happenings in the state in these turbulent times is quite important.

Keywords: Social media, Manipur mayhem, Ethnic violence, Ethnic polarisation

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## **Incidental or Intentional? Examining How Social Media Use Shapes Political Knowledge**

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This study investigates the dual pathways through which social media consumption contributes to political knowledge: incidental exposure and intentional information seeking. In recent years, social media platforms have become ubiquitous news sources, yet their educational value remains contested. On one hand, users may passively encounter political content—headlines, memes, or peer commentary—while engaging with social updates, a process we term “incidental learning.” On the other, politically motivated users deliberately search, follow, and share news, reflecting “intentional learning.” Distinguishing these modes is critical for understanding social media’s net effect on democratic engagement.

According to democratic ideals, the ultimate purpose of acquiring political knowledge is to participate in political processes as an informed citizen. One factor that may have meaningful implications on the relationship between social media use and political knowledge may be the presence of various types of political information online.

There is a complementary role of incidental and intentional learning in digital political socialization. While deliberate news consumption remains crucial for deepening understanding, incidental exposure on mainstream social platforms plays a non-negligible role in raising baseline awareness. Policymakers and educators should therefore consider strategies that enhance the visibility and credibility of political content across diverse user journeys.

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## **Youth Engagement on the Digital Democratic Space: A Case of Nagaland**

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Over the last decade, the burgeoning of the youth as a significant demographic cohort and the proliferation of social media in India have coincidentally created new dynamics and challenges in the country’s discourse. The amount of time youngsters

spent online, conversely, as end consumers and also as content creators, ushered in the dawn of a new sub-political culture distinct from the generations that precede them. Given the young digital space and transformative potential of social media, youth-centric digital initiatives have been introduced by the government agencies, political parties, NGOs, youth-focused entities, and even by the youth themselves. These interventions have yielded positive and nuanced outcomes. This paper delves into the logic of youth's interaction with the social media landscape, exploring whether their agency extends beyond the digital space into a sustained and actionable form. The paper is limited to discussing the shifting political participation of youth in social media usage. It is an attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge in a wider social dimension, engendering the dialogue on the youth as a resource of the common good while acknowledging the multifaceted agency of young people. Relevant secondary literature and empirical data are used for this paper.

Keywords: Youth, Social Media, Political Agency, Digital Natives, Activism, Misinformation, Disinformation.

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**The Simulacrum State: War, Peace, and the Digital Manufacture  
of Reality in Manipur**

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In the ongoing conflict in Manipur, digital platforms have not only transformed the way violence is communicated but have also reshaped the very perception of war and peace. This paper examines how digital technologies have enabled the emergence of a Simulacrum State, wherein both war and peace are rendered as hyperreal constructs detached from the material realities of those most affected by the conflict. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and hyperreality, the paper identifies two dominant digital simulations operating simultaneously.

The first is a hyperreal warzone, created through digital performance. Here, masses engage in symbolic conflict through the sharing of nationalist slogans, propaganda, and videos in which individuals perform frontline scenarios dressed in militaristic coordinated outfits, brandish weapons, and unfurling flags to curated audio of battle readiness. This spectacle displaces the actual geographic and emotional frontlines,



producing a society of control in which non-participants are surveilled and kept within normative corporeal boundaries. In this simulation, the voices of digital warriors take precedence over those of communities enduring real violence and displacement.

The second is a simulacrum of peace, cultivated through state-sponsored narratives of development, tourism, and cultural festivities. Digital influencers often capitalise and reinforce these narratives, appealing to publics fatigued by conflict and yearning for normalcy. However, this performative peace serves to further erase the lived experiences of those within the conflict zone.

Together, these dual simulacra of war and peace sustain a digital conflict economy rooted in performance, control, and erasure. They prolong the crisis by prioritising simulation over reality, transforming populations into militarised minds and surveilled bodies, and displacing authentic pathways to peace building.

### **Cultural Politics among Meitei Pangals in Manipur: Managing Identity, Syncretism, and Marginalization**

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The paper examines the intricate dynamics of cultural politics among the Meitei Pangal (Manipuri Muslim) community in Manipur, a region characterized by its diverse ethnic landscape and complex socio-political realities. As a distinct minority group, the Meitei Pangals have forged a unique cultural identity, shaped by a historical synthesis of their own indigenous traditions and Islamic practices, yet this syncretism often becomes a site of contestation and negotiation within the broader Manipuri context. The paper will explore how Meitei Pangals' cultural expressions including language, social customs, festivals, tradition and belief are both products of historical integration and instruments for asserting distinct community identity in contemporary Manipur. It intends to analyse the political implications of the cultural synthesis, particularly in relation to the dominant Meitei culture and other ethnic groups. The study will also explore how the Meitei Pangals manage issues of representation and marginalization, assess how their cultural identity is impacted by, and respond to various political pressures, including ethnic conflicts, socio-economic disparities, and policy frameworks. Drawing on historical narratives, ethnographic insights, and contemporary events, this



article aims to illuminate the resilient cultural politics of the Meitei Pangal community, highlight their strategies for maintaining their heritage, asserting their presence, and seeking equitable recognition within Manipur's evolving sociopolitical landscape.

Keyword: Identity, Syncretism, Marginalization, Recognition, Culture, and Diversity.

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**Women's Body as a Site of Humiliation in Manipur Conflict:  
A Dissectional Observation of the Naked Parade**

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The political strife and contentions started from May 3rd, 2023 deserved to have a nuanced analysis through exposing different shades and realities. With the escalation of contentions and violence among two community on every level, there is a repressive appropriation of women into a mere passive member with a limited agency of their own body, thoughts and expression within its entire ethno-centric political scheme. Despite many symbolic grand events of shaming, raping, torturing of women that belong to the rival groups, the very crux of the issue did remain understated. Celebrated media platforms, digital crusaders hardly put effort to bring out the narratives of those women who are in actual pain.

This paper tries to initiate discourses concerning women that prevails exclusively during the ongoing conflict. The naked parade of two Kuki women during the peak of the crisis itself is a clear manifestation of patriarchal condemnation for the rival group by using 'female body' as a political medium.

The study analyses the particular act and also observe the aftermath conversations and opinions among the valley population. Media and other familiar content creators and their role in interpreting the very act. Since the body of women were seen as is as a medium hence reducing them into a mere passive agent to reinforce ideological boundary, keeping away from having real and active political exchange of thoughts and conduct. So, in displaying out masculinist aggression and to proof dominance, those women were paraded naked giving a robust hint that the 'other' women have been exploited and stripped off which is supposed to remain protected and untouched by other men of rival groups. By doing so, it tries to proof the other as weak and effeminate.

On the later part, the effort of collecting information by media and digital content creators from women that belong to Meitei community to disclose any of the similar violent incident incase if had happened to them, turns out to be an exclusive act of saving community's once ripped off image and clearly not about women. The prioritization is callous and insensitive. Hence, it shows how women's body become a token of humiliation within the patriarchal society which were majorly plagued by conflict.

### **Media Ownership Patterns and Its Influence on Media Freedom and Professionalism in Manipur: An Analysis**

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Media, whether in print or broadcasting form, has a significant impact on shaping public opinion and influencing political dynamics in society. It possesses the power to portray the innocent as guilty and the guilty as innocent. The information provided by the media can shape the mindsets of the masses, highlighting the importance of adhering to moral and ethical standards. Media concentration in the hands of a few tycoons has been shown to impact journalism negatively; thus, who owns and operates the media is significant. Media owners were found to influence journalists and the content they produce, often through manipulation of information, which in turn affects their professional standards. As a result, fundamental elements of professional ethics—such as truth verification, relevance, balance, fairness, and objectivity—can be compromised in favour of the owners' interests. The paper, therefore, aims to analyse the influence of media ownership patterns and their impact on media freedom and professionalism in Manipur. In other words, the paper seeks to establish a relationship between journalists' professional aptitude and media ownership patterns in Manipur.

Keywords: Media, Media Ownership Patterns, Media Ethics, Media Freedom, Manipur

## **The Role of the Internet in the Ongoing Meitei-Kuki Conflict**

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This article explores the complex role of the internet in the ongoing Meitei-Kuki ethnic conflict in Manipur, India, emphasizing how digital technologies have transformed the landscape of communal violence and peace building. While the internet has enabled rapid mobilization, dissemination of alternative narratives, and global solidarity it has also exacerbated tensions through the unchecked spread of hate speech, misinformation, and gendered digital violence. The study traces how both Meitei and Kuki communities have used social media to assert competing historical and political claims, while also examining the state's response -most notably, prolonged internet shutdowns and digital surveillance. Drawing from media reports, scholarly literature, and civil society documentation, the article argues that the internet functions both as a tool of conflict and resistance. It highlights the urgent need for community driven digital literacy, multilingual content moderation, and ethical governance frameworks to address the dual potentials of the internet in conflict zones.

**Keywords:** Meitei-Kuki conflict, ethnic violence, internet shutdowns, social media, misinformation, digital hate speech, Manipur, communal conflict, digital surveillance, citizen journalism, algorithmic bias, diaspora activism, online mobilization, gendered violence, digital governance.

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## **Media and Social Inclusion: The Role of Digital Platforms in Empowering Transgender Community**

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Social media indeed has a significant impact on shaping societal attitudes and encouraging social inclusion, especially for marginalised groups such as transgender individuals. While digital platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube provide transgender people with opportunities to share personal stories, experience less isolation and promotion of a sense of belongingness and empowerment, numerous

transgender individuals still face difficulties in finding or accessing direct social support. Can the representation of transgender people in mainstream media improve the public understanding of this community? Through various posts, videos, stories, and campaigns, transgender individuals can express their identities, share their journeys, and advocate for their rights. So the objective of this study is to highlight how these digital presentations can contribute to public education by providing authentic, lived experiences that confront stereotypes and misunderstandings. This study investigates the impact of social media in understanding transgender individuals and examines whether it truly serves as a tool for obtaining social support and psychosocial well-being of the transgender community. And, for media to be a genuine agent for positive change, it must go beyond superficial representation and guarantee diverse, respectful, and accurate depictions.

### Digital Governance in Conflict Zones

**(Governance challenges and renewed collaboration between authorities and civil society in Manipur since the Meitei-Kuki conflict)**

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&

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The Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur has created serious challenges for governance, social unity, and public institution trust. This study looks at how the conflict has weakened administrative abilities and disrupted democratic participation. It also examines the new needs for cooperation between state authorities and civil society organizations. The study highlights the dual impact of the crisis. The way it reduces trust in governance through prolonged violence, widespread and selective displacement, and perceived partiality. Secondly, it incites the need of new efforts for collaboration focusing on conflict resolution, humanitarian aid, sustainable source of livelihood and community healing. The paper will selectively use qualitative data collected whilst having conversation with local officials, club leaders, Meira paibis and community members affected by the conflict. The study shows that civil society actors have been crucial in bridging the gaps, providing essential services, and promoting more inclusive

governance practices. The results of the study have highlighted the importance of collaborations between civil societies and legitimate institutions which have helped stabilize the situation and reopen lines of communication, despite difficulties brought on by political divisions, miscommunication, mistrust and lack of resources. This study focuses on the fact that considering Manipur's complicated social, political, and economic environment, sustaining these cooperative efforts is essential to addressing persistent governance challenges and establishing a long-term democratic goal. The study contributes to broader conversations about participatory governance, post-conflict reconstruction and development and the changing dynamics of the state-society relationship in ethnically diverse regions.

Keywords: ethnic clash, governance, civil society, post conflict reconstruction

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### **Digital Inclusion in Rural India: Impacts, Barriers and Recommendations**

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India's rapid digital transformation through the Digital India initiative has brought significant advancements in governance, education, healthcare, and financial inclusion. However, a severe Digital Divide persists, especially between urban and rural populations, where lack of access, affordability, digital infrastructure, and literacy continue to challenge equitable participation. This paper explores the concept of Digital Inclusion in rural India, analyzing the key initiatives undertaken by government namely the National e-Governance Plan, Common Service Centres, Digital India, e-Panchayat Program, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), Aadhaar seeding and integration, PMGDISHA and MOOCs like SWAYAM and NPTEL, etc. It also examines the impact of these initiatives in enhancing accessibility, transparency, efficiency, and citizen empowerment in rural areas. The study further highlights the transformative potential of digital tools in bridging socio-economic gaps, improving livelihoods, and fostering inclusive growth. It also highlights the various challenges such as poor connectivity, low digital literacy, infrastructural gaps, socio-economic disparities, affordability constraints, and misuse of digital platforms which remain prominent especially in marginalized

and remote communities, thereby limiting them to have access to quality education, employment opportunities and sustainable economic growth. It concludes by offering practical recommendations including digital infrastructure development, digital equity, affordable access, digital awareness and literacy, localized content, community-centric training and engagements to inculcate digital and technological know-how to achieve meaningful and sustainable digital inclusion in rural India.

### **The Internet as an International Actor? Globalisation, Networked Anarchy, and Regional Peacebuilding in Northeast India**

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The rapid expansion of the Internet has transformed the dynamics of governance, conflict, and development, calling for fresh theoretical perspectives. This paper argues that the Internet functions as a distinct nonstate actor operating within a globalised, networked form of international anarchy. Drawing on insights from my doctoral research on globalization and international anarchy, the paper conceptualizes the Internet not merely as a communication tool but as an active participant shaping authority, sovereignty, and order.

In classical international relations, anarchy refers to a system lacking an overarching authority, where states dominate. Globalisation, however, has layered this system with transnational actors and international organisations. The Internet accelerates this shift by creating borderless digital spaces where information flows and collective mobilization occur, often beyond state control.

Focusing on Northeast India—a region marked by ethnic diversity, longstanding conflict dynamics, and developmental aspirations—the paper demonstrates how online platforms amplify grievances and misinformation during unrest, while also enabling peacebuilding initiatives and service delivery. Civil society networks use social media to counter violence narratives, and digital governance initiatives extend education and health access to remote areas.

By framing the Internet as an international actor, this paper highlights its dual role: disrupting traditional sovereignty while fostering new anchors of governance and cooperation. This understanding is vital for shaping policies that harness digital

networks for democracy, peacebuilding, and inclusive development in Northeast India.

Keywords: Globalization, Internet Governance, International Anarchy, nonState Actors, Northeast India, Peacebuilding, Digital Development

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**Empowering Voices: Manipuri Women and Youth in  
Technology-Powered Peacebuilding**

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This paper examines the changing role of women and youth of Manipur in digital peace building, with a focus on how they have evolved from passive participants to active mediators of conflict. Despite being historically excluded from official peace processes, women and youth are increasingly using technology, such as, social media, mobile applications, and online advocacy platforms, to express their concerns, promote communication, and create connections between disparate populations. Digital tools enable these organisations to approach exclusion, dissipate false information, and establish virtual spaces for inclusive peace narratives by looking at case studies from conflict-affected areas. In light of the region's ongoing ethnic conflicts and socio-political upheaval, Manipuri women and youth are increasingly using technology, particularly digital campaigns, social media platforms, and community-based mobile networks, to refute misinformation, promote peace, and preserve cultural identity. These organisations are using digital tools to record violence, promote justice, and foster interethnic conversation, drawing on current case studies and grassroots initiatives. Nevertheless, there are also various infrastructure and sociocultural constraints that limit their participation, including as monitoring, the gendered digital divide, online harassment, and patriarchal standards. Hence, the inclusion of Manipuri women's and youth's digital agency in official peace efforts in Manipur, policy proposals on enhancing digital capabilities, promoting inclusive governance, and protecting online civic spaces for under-represented voices are essential. In fact, role of the women and youths of Manipur are not peripheral, rather pivotal in peace building. Thus, the paper argues that peace building frameworks should be redefined to emphasise women's and youths' digital agency as essential to inclusive and lasting peace in Manipur. Digital tools are the catalysts for narratives of peace and identity transformation.



Keywords: Manipuri, Women, Youth, Peace building, Digital, Technology, Inclusive, Conflicts.

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### **Digital Patriarchy: A Feminist Critique of Technological Violence**

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The advent of advanced digital technologies, particularly AI generated deepfakes has profoundly altered the digital space with new implications for gender, power and digital agency. This has opened up new arenas of vulnerability, especially for women. This paper explores the idea that weaponization of deepfakes against women represents an extension of patriarchal control and disruption of women's autonomy, consent, and digital personhood and thus needs to be studied as a political phenomenon and not just a digital one. By critically examining the gendered dimensions of digital manipulation, this paper aims to highlight how these technologies are weaponized to shame or disempower women thereby reinforcing broader structures of inequality and control. Drawing from Feminist Political Theory and the works of Iris Marion Young on structural injustice, Judith Butler on performativity and vulnerability of bodies and Michel Foucault on surveillance and power, the paper theorizes digital disinformation as continuation of patriarchal control in virtual public spaces. The study highlights the need for feminist informed digital policy and argues that the politics of representation, consent and digital embodiment must be central to any democratic response.

Keywords: Deepfake, Patriarchy, Consent, Autonomy, Digital Personhood.

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### **Social Diversity and Conflict: Examining the role of Internet**

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The internet, today in our life, has become pervasive and indispensable, we use internet daily for various purposes and its uses is not going to stop today or tomorrow. In this digital era the internet is the main force. This paper will examine how internet, despite the many opportunities it has provided us, promotes social division,



tension and trigger conflict in a diverse society. Liberal democracy and advocate of free speech has help in the rise of an unchecked, unfiltered and unbridled information, and though internet aid in communication it can also easily spread misinformation, hate speech, fake news and aid to social division and tension. Diverse society is more prone to enter into instability and conflict as diversity of interest, identity and values is not easy to compromise. Ethnic and cultural differences can lead to misunderstanding, biases and prejudices. The internet can spread message or information in an instant and can reach far and wide areas as such internet can speed up stereotyping and demonization of a person or community. Although internet has made communication fast it is also not easy to verify and check authenticity of news and source of information thus easily creating tension and polarising society and people tended to act to such emotions generated by fake news and hate speeches. The internet has helped in the rise of artificial intelligence and it is becoming easy to create or doctored speech and video that can determine social stability and peace.

Keywords: social diversity, conflict, internet, digital era, free speech, hate speech, liberal democracy, ethnic, stereotype, artificial intelligence

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### **Digital Transformation in Midst of Marginalized Communities**

As Zinghorrin

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Digitalization has transformed our lives and attitudes towards technology; the profound impact can be seen much more on the marginalized communities and individuals requiring special attention. Discussing the issue of marginalization in the face of digital transformation is the need of the hour. Marginalization refers to lack of integration or the consideration as an outsider among the dominant communities. Marginality influences what people can achieve and limits their abilities to take advantage of the resources and opportunities afforded to non-marginalized peers. Furthermore, marginalized individuals and groups are often politically, economically, and/or socially vulnerable, as their susceptibility to harm is greater, often due to their exclusion from critical resources. The concept of marginalization has now extended to cultural, social, and digital exclusion. The approach towards digital marginalization encompasses communities with limited access and skills of social media. It is possible that social marginalization may amplify both the benefits and costs of online self-expression and support seeking. As such, visibility may work against individuals with a marginalized identity as they may face personal and legal consequences simply for voicing their

opinion. The marginalized communities consider Digital media as one of the tools to connect with the rest of the population which can be amplify through public education and digital awareness programs.

Keywords: marginalization, digital literacy, social media

### **The role of social media in conflict escalation**

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**S**ocial media refers to websites and applications that allow people to create and share content, communicate, and interact with others online. It encompasses a wide range of platforms, including social networking sites, photo and video sharing platforms, and messaging apps, enabling users to connect, share information, and build online communities. Social media can significantly escalate social conflicts through the rapid spread of information, echo chambers, and the potential for anonymity to embolden harmful rhetoric. It can amplify divisive narratives, spread misinformation, and create environments where extreme viewpoints are reinforced.

The rapid dissemination of false or misleading information in social media can fuel tensions and escalation of conflicts. Social media amplifies emotions like anger, fear or hatred and creates an environment which is conducive to conflict escalation. It can also polarise opinions by reinforcing existing biases and making it difficult to find common ground or resolve conflicts peacefully. Hateful speech and discriminatory contents which are often circulated in social media can incite violence and aggressive behaviour towards specific groups. The conflict which escalates through social media eventually results in mistrust and hostility between groups or communities. Social media can mobilize people around a cause or issue, potentially leading to protest, demonstration or other forms of conflict. It provides a platform for anonymity where hatred or harmful contents are disseminated with little accountability and the negative effects of social med undermines efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully.

To mitigate the negative effects of social media on conflict escalation, it is important to promote fact-based information, counter misinformation, encourage respectful online interactions and dialogue, implement effective moderation policies

to prevent the spread of harmful content and support initiatives that promote empathy, understanding, and conflict resolution.

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### **Youth and Digital Media in Manipur: Patterns and Preferences**

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New media has occupied the daily lives of youth in urban areas of Manipur. This study examines the underlying motives and reasons that drive the youth in engaging with various new media platforms, employing the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory as its primary theoretical framework. This study focuses on understanding the active role of the users in selecting and utilizing media to fulfil specific needs and desires from the lens of U&G theory. By exploring the gratifications sought and obtained from new media consumption, this study aims to provide understandings into the diverse psychological, social, and informational needs that new media platforms address for the youth. The findings will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of media consumption patterns in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, particularly within a distinct socio-cultural context like Manipur.

Keywords: New media, uses and gratifications, youth, media consumption

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### **Role of Digital Transformation on Indian Government: A Critical Analysis**

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This study explores the Role of Digital transformation on the Indian government and citizens engagement. The citizens engagement models are most preferred and



of grassroot women-led movement and how it also acted as a main Political Socializing agent of women in Manipur.

Keywords: Digital tools, Meira Paibis, Peace, Political Socilization.

# SECTION D



## **From Hashtags to Harmony: Youth-Led Digital Peacebuilding and Indigenous Knowledge Revitalisation in North East India**

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In the ethnically diverse and conflict-ridden region of North East India, young people are emerging as vital agents of peace, using digital platforms not merely for the articulation of emotions and mobilisation but for cultural memory, reconciliation, and resistance. This paper examines the evolving role of youth-led digital storytelling as a grassroots peacebuilding strategy that challenges both state-centric narratives and communal/ethnic polarisation. It focuses on how youth from conflict-affected states such as Nagaland and Manipur—use social media to craft alternative imaginaries of coexistence rooted in indigenous cultural practices, oral histories, and collective memory, emphasizing the role of indigenous epistemologies.

While the paper foregrounds youth as digital peacebuilders, it also examines how indigenous knowledge systems—rituals of forgiveness, folktales of coexistence, oral traditions, and customary conflict resolution practices, are being recontextualized and re-presented in digital formats. These efforts not only preserve cultural memory but also serve as epistemic tools to resist homogenised, polarised, or top-bottom narratives. However, the paper remains cautious about romanticising digital inclusion, noting limitations such as infrastructural disparity, algorithmic marginalisation of indigenous content, and the precarity of platform-dependent activism.

Drawing on the frameworks of Everyday Peace (Mac Ginty, 2014), Narrative Agency (Polletta, 2006), and Indigenous Epistemologies (Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), the study analyzes digital campaigns and content—from Instagram and YouTube micro-documentaries to podcasts and digital art—which foreground narratives of shared heritage, reconciliation, and cultural resilience. Examples include storytelling projects like #VoicesOfTheValley and # MyCultureMy Peace, community-curated heritage pages, and short films that reimagine inter-community ties disrupted by recent ethnic violence.

Ultimately, the paper argues that youth-driven digital storytelling represents a hybrid model of peacebuilding—where vernacular knowledge and digital media converge to create spaces for empathy, identity re-articulation, and participatory reconciliation.



Keywords: Digital peacebuilding, youth agency, indigenous knowledge systems, everyday peace, narrative politics, digital storytelling, participatory reconciliation, indigenous epistemologies.

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### **From Miya Poetry to Manipur: Vernacular Misinformation, Gendered Harassment, and Algorithmic Hate in Northeast India**

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**I**n spite of growing internet penetration in Northeast India—**surpassing 68% in Assam and 75% in Manipur according to 2023 TRAI figures**—scholarship has not sufficiently asked questions on how digital spaces in the region facilitate vernacular misinformation, gendered harassment, and algorithmic promotion of ethnic hate. Current literature is inclined to dwell on either the infrastructural shortages of internet connectivity or the political rationality of state-initiated shutdowns, neglecting a critical understanding of how linguistic and algorithmic forces intersect to enable digital violence. This paper investigates how hyper-local narratives like the demonization of Miya poetry in Assam and **pre-2023 Manipur online mobilizations** reflect and reproduce deep-seated ethno-nationalist fault lines through social media. The research employs a blended approach of **digital ethnography, platform interface examination, and critical discourse analysis** of Facebook, YouTube, and native-language Telegram groups. The **analysis finds that regional language content is abnormally used to engineer caste-coded, gendered, and communal imaginaries, frequently evading moderation because of algorithmic opaqueness.** These dynamics not only intensify current social cleavages but also unveil infrastructural bias in content regulation. This research calls for reconsidering digital policy in intersectional regional contexts and suggests the bringing together of vernacular moderation practices, algorithmic openness, and local digital literacy programs.

Keywords: Northeast India, Miya poetry, disinformation, Manipur violence, algorithmic bias, vernacular hate speech, gendered harassment, digital ethnography, ethno-nationalism.

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## Analyzing the Internet's Role in Societal Division and Peacebuilding in Manipur and Global Arenas

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The Internet, a transformative force in global connectivity, has emerged as a volatile arena for digital conflicts, intensifying societal divisions and challenging human rights and peacebuilding. This article employs a multidisciplinary lens to analyze how digital platforms exacerbate conflicts through misinformation, hate speech, and polarization, amplify tensions via social media; drive radicalization through psychological mechanisms; and undermine peace efforts with Internet shutdowns. The 2023-2025 Manipur conflicts in India, where disinformation on platforms like WhatsApp and X fueled Meitei-kuki ethnic violence, resulting in significant casualties and displacement, serves as a critical case study. Comparative global cases, including the 2019 Hong Kong protests and Myanmar's 2017 Rohingya crisis, illustrate parallel dynamics. Algorithmic echo chambers and cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, accelerate radicalization, particularly among youth. Internet shutdowns, as observed in Manipur (2024) and Kashmir (2019), infringe on freedoms of expression and disrupt peacebuilding, exacerbating socio economic losses. Drawing on social identity theory and media studies, this article proposes platform governance reforms, digital literacy initiatives, deradicalization programs, and advocacy for uninterrupted connectivity to mitigate digital conflicts. In Manipur, neutral mediation and disarmament are imperative. This study contributes to scholarly discourses on digital conflicts, offering actionable insights for fostering a digital ecosystem that promotes peace and human rights.

Keywords: Digital conflicts, misinformation, hate speech, online polarization, social media, radicalization, Internet shutdowns, Manipur conflicts, human rights

## Biopolitics of the Signal: Internet Shutdowns as a Tool of Conflict Hygiene

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The internet has become a weapon of state control, with governments around the world trying to regulate it like a 21<sup>st</sup> century printing press. In India's Northeast region, internet shutdowns have become a normalized response to episodes of political

instability and ethnic unrest, typically framed the action as emergency measures to contain misinformation and stem violence.

Drawing from Michel Foucault's biopower – the management and regulation of populations as biological entities – this paper argues that the Indian state treats digital connectivity as a biological infrastructure that sustains economic activity communication, dissent, solidarity - but also hate and misinformation, and therefore can be quarantined or to instill 'peace'. This biopolitical angle positions internet shutdowns within contemporary forms of *algorithmic governmentality* that extend beyond traditional theoretical understandings of sociology, security studies and governance.

Introducing the concept of '*conflict hygiene*', this paper theorizes internet shutdowns as infrastructural acts of sanitization – akin to epidemic containment measures, but for a digital world. In regions like Manipur, Kashmir and Assam, the state enacts a form of 'digital triage', identifying internet connectivity not as a public good to be preserved and distributed, but as a potential vector of social 'infohazards' requiring top-down neutralization. This hygiene logic reflects deeper ventures in how sovereignty is exercised over flows of communication, discourse, dissent and disinformation.

The analysis, drawing from documentation from verified shutdown logs, policy orders and legal justifications from 2019-2024 in Manipur, Assam and Kashmir, reveals how shutdowns deployed as both reactive and preemptive tools of the state's arsenal to moderate digital communication channels and how it becomes pertinent to conflict management but at the cost of reshaping the lives of citizens offline.

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### **Digital connectivity and their implications during conflict situations in north east India**

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Internet becoming a part of governance in India through initiatives like “digital bharat” launched by honourable prime minister Narendra Modi has increased the access of internet in North-East India from the last decades. The paper mainly focuses on the role internet plays during the time of conflict in north eastern region which is historically and ethnically hostile area serving as a ground for different ethnic and regional conflict. The Internet often acts as a double edged sword promoting both peace and tension in

democratic setup. The study focuses on exploring the dynamics of how the internet is misused to promote social instability. The spread of mis-information and division of groups into “us vs them” narratives and how it all gets promoted through social media. It uses the reference of Internet shutdown during the citizenship amendment act(CAA) protest in Assam and recent Manipur conflict between Kuki and Meitei community and its impact on human rights, especially the fundamental right of “freedom of speech and expression” mentioned in the Indian constitution. It deals with how the government uses shutdown as a mechanism to ensure security and as a result it can build mistrust among the people. Lastly, it focuses on building a balanced approach which includes promoting digital literacy to create a healthy digital space to ensure democratic stability and peace building.

### **Digital radicalisation and India’s Social Fabric: Emerging threats to Pluralism**

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The diverse and pluralistic India has begun to witness communal hatred being weaponised by cyberspace, creating social divides. The digital platform has enhanced connectivity, but also prepared the ground for radicalisation to flourish, especially in the wake of terror attacks. Social media became central to the dissemination of hate speech and extremist narratives targeting religious minorities. Extremists exploit national trauma to polarise public opinion and fabricate religious intolerance.

This paper seeks to examine the mechanisms through which communal hatred is manufactured and amplified post-terror attacks. The divisive agendas manipulate anger and grief via misinformation, doctored content and algorithmic virality that incites a volatile ecosystem. These false communal narratives erode trust among different communities, threatening the unity of India.

Recently, digital hate mirrored and intensified offline violence as well. The existing community standards lack enforcement by tech platforms, often escalating tensions by allowing violative content.

By observation of digital patterns after high-profile terror incidents (the Phalgham attack, for instance, triggered a wave of communal rumours) and analysing recent case

studies, this paper will highlight how online radicalisation targets vulnerable youth and brings back cycles of exclusion. This paper also explores the role of transnational influencers like global terror networks and radical diaspora elements in worsening communalism.

The study demands regulated cyber surveillance, counter-narrative campaigns and inclusive digital literacy. Therefore, it is essential to reaffirm the democratic values assured by the Indian Constitution by ensuring interfaith solidarity in digital spaces along with conformation to secularism.

Keywords: Digital radicalisation, communal hatred, cyberspace, terror attacks, surveillance

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**Facebook Echo Chambers and Ethnic Polarization in Manipur: A Discourse  
Analysis of the 2023–24 Conflict and Its Implications for Digital Peacebuilding**

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**D**arul Huda Islamic University The convergence of digital technology and ethnic conflict has arisen as a signifying issue in Northeast India’s modern-day politics. The present paper critically analyses the role played by Facebook’s algorithmic echo chambers in facilitating ethnic polarization during the 2023–24 conflict in Manipur, fitting within the central themes of Digital, Diversity, Democracy, and Development. Drawing on discourse analysis of publicly available Facebook comments, posts, and community group interactions between May 2023 and March 2024, the research investigates how online discourses amplified communal tensions between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.

The findings show how the algorithm of Facebook promoted emotionally charged, ethnically coded posts in closed online spaces. The echo chambers spread disinformation, inflammatory memes, and polarizing hashtags — particularly during episodes of violence in Imphal and Churachandpur — resulting in mass misperceptions and supporting “us versus them” narratives. Several viral posts, later debunked or fact-checked, played a role in igniting digital outrage and offline tensions.

The report also assesses the function of internet shutdowns, imposed as a state reaction to digital discontent. Although aimed at halting the propagation of toxic content,

the shutdowns interrupted humanitarian coordination, restricted access to reliable information, and reinforced public distrust—causing serious concerns regarding digital rights and democratic rule.

The article concludes with some suggestions for digital peacebuilding in the form of platform responsibility for region-centric content moderation, anticipatory misinformation tracking, and partnership with local civil society to enhance digital literacy. In connecting social media activity with on-the-ground conflict dynamics, the research helps to better understand the ways in which digital platforms both mirror and affect ethnic conflict in fragile democratic spaces such as Manipur.

Keywords: Manipur, Facebook Echo Chambers, Ethnic Polarization, Distorted Narrative, Digital Peacebuilding

### **Digital Eyes in the Sky: How UAVs are Redefining Conflict Reporting and Media Coverage in Northeast India**

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In regions like Northeast India, marked by complex socio-political realities, ethnic diversity, and periodic conflict - access to reliable, real-time information remains a critical challenge. With the growing availability and adaptability of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or drones, a quiet transformation is taking place in how stories of conflict, resilience, and regional change are being documented and shared. This paper explores how UAVs, particularly those equipped with high-resolution imaging and live-stream capabilities, are redefining traditional media practices and enabling new forms of conflict reporting in the region.

Drawing from field experiences and real-case observations from Manipur and its neighboring states, the paper examines the dual role of drones as both journalistic tools and instruments of citizen documentation. It highlights how UAVs offer safer, more immersive reporting options in areas where human access is restricted due to terrain or tension. At the same time, it addresses the ethical, legal, and security concerns that accompany the rise of drone journalism especially in fragile democratic spaces.

This study argues that when responsibly used, UAVs can serve as digital eyes that offer more than just surveillance they can foster transparency, amplify unheard voices, and support the broader goals of digital democracy and peacebuilding in Northeast India. The paper ultimately calls for clearer policy frameworks and capacity-building measures to harness this evolving tool for ethical storytelling and regional development

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### **Digital Inclusion and Empowering Marginalised Voices**

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Digital inclusion has emerged as a critical component of social justice, focusing on bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) for all, particularly marginalised communities. It encompassed affordable access to devices and the internet, digital literacy, inclusive content, and accessible technology. Empowering marginalised voices through digital platforms enables greater participation in political, economic, educational, and cultural spheres. Social media and digital tools have become powerful means for political expression and mobilisation, allowing historically excluded groups to advocate for their rights, engage in activism, and hold the government accountable. Economically, digital inclusion facilitates e-commerce, online payments, and remote work, opening new income avenues for rural populations, women, and informal workers. Educationally, online learning platforms and localised content promote equal access to knowledge, while culturally, digital storytelling and content creation allow underrepresented groups to preserve and share their heritage. However, challenges persist. The digital divide remains pronounced along urban-rural, gender, and income lines. Algorithmic biases, cyber harassment, and linguistic exclusion further hinder the full participation of marginalised communities. Additionally, many platforms and services are not adequately designed to accommodate people with disabilities or those from non-dominant linguistic backgrounds. Policy interventions, such as India's Digital India initiative, BharatNet, and digital literacy programs like PMGDISHA, aim to reduce these gaps. Public-private partnerships and community-led internet services are also crucial in ensuring grassroots-level digital access. Legal and regulatory measures to safeguard online rights and prevent discrimination are equally important. In conclusion, digital inclusion is essential not only for technological progress but also for democratic empowerment and



social equity. By enabling marginalised voices to be heard, digital inclusion promotes a more inclusive, participatory, and just society. Ensuring meaningful digital access for all is a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development in the digital age.

Key words: Social justice, Marginalised, Algorithmic biases, BharatNet, Technological.

### **Internet Shutdowns, Human Rights and Peacebuilding in Manipur**

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With the total internet shutdown of 296 globally in 2024, India ranked second with a total number of 84, affecting 16 States and Union Territories in India. According to Report, most shutdowns happened in Manipur (21 times), Haryana (12) and Jammu and Kashmir (12) given the reason to 41 related to protests, 23 due to communal violence. In 2023, the longest internet shutdown took place in Manipur (for over 7000 hours) from May to December amidst ethnic clashes and violence in Manipur according to Top10VPN January 2. In case of Manipur, according to Indian Journal of Medical Research, it had a huge impact on education, healthcare and economy. In addition, according to a study published by NIH, it affected postgraduate trainees, impacting their professional and personal lives. Emergency services were severely hampered by internet shutdowns; communication disrupted, limited access to information. Internet shutdowns have also given rise to the concern regarding freedom of speech and expression which is a violation of Human Rights. Although, many see it as a negative impact, as a researcher, positive impact must also be highlighted. Internet shutdowns are also seen as a way of maintaining public order. This paper will highlight both positive and negative impact of internet shutdown with special reference to Manipur. How far the governments have curtailed the ongoing situation by shutting down the internet facilities? Whether shutting down of internet have brought any changes? Moreover, it will also highlight the impact on human rights and a way to peacebuilding.

Keywords: Manipur, Internet-shutdown, Impact, Human Rights



## **Democratic Participation in the Digital Age: Insights from Northeast India**

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This paper explores how digital technologies are reshaping democratic participation in Northeast India, a region marked by complex socio-political dynamics and geographical isolation. As India embraces e-governance and digital public services, Northeast India presents a unique context where digital inclusion can either empower or further marginalise communities. The paper examines the role of digital platforms in enhancing voter awareness, access to government services, and citizen engagement. However, these digital initiatives often come with unintended exclusions. Issues such as poor internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, language barriers, limited infrastructure, and exclusion of underrepresented groups continue to hinder equitable access. Through an analysis of local developments, government initiatives, and citizen experiences, the study highlights both the opportunities and limitations of digital democracy in the region. The study aims to argue that while digital tools hold promise for strengthening democratic participation and processes, they must be implemented with inclusivity at the core, ensuring equitable access and culturally sensitive implementation for a meaningful engagement in the digital age, one that truly promotes democratic participation for all. In addition, the study calls for a governance model that will genuinely strengthen democracy in the region; it must be inclusive, context-sensitive, and supported by infrastructure that reaches all sections of society.

Keywords: democratic participation, digital literacy, digital exclusion, social media, inclusive development, northeast India

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## **Nationalism and ism: the popular culture and social media in Manipur state**

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Since the past few years onward, internet has become an important aspect of Manipur state. Content creators and social media influencers have contributed a lot in the state of Manipur. On other side, with the on-going ethnic conflict, views from different perspective can take centre-stage as Manipur's current issues. Internet ban is another crucial aspect, which Manipur state had been associated.

The objective of this paper is to examine different stages of the usage of social media. Right to democratic dissent in the social media space can also harbour “ism” characteristics. Multi-cultural Manipur state, it is crucial to maintain a status quo. Certain events in recent times have reshaped the idea of Manipur state; the responses vary from individual to others.

Case study of social media’s viral stories pertaining to Manipur state will be examined. As a socially conscious citizen, one of my objectives is to represent the idea of Manipur state holistically. Internet ban, which lasted for several months will also be analysed. Global warming and environmental disaster, with specific reference to flooding in Imphal valley will be examined. In this context, the “ism” factor is personified by secularism ethos, there was no division between the Nagas and Meitei people, who were affected by floods, personal accounts will be illustrated.

Government notification (Pamphlets) will also be analysed. Simple life stories of people in Manipur state who are going on with their everyday life, despite challenging situations will be taken into account.

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**Social Media, Ethnic Conflict, and the Crisis of Communication in  
Manipur: A Theoretical Inquiry through the Whac-A-Mole Effect  
and Habermas’s Communicative Action**

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The growing reach of internet connectivity in Manipur has significantly influenced communication, mobilisation, and access to information. However, in the context of the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities, digital platforms have also become catalysts for the rapid spread of misinformation, communal narratives, and online radicalisation. Social media, driven by algorithmic amplification and linguistic localisation, often intensifies polarising discourse, reinforces ethnic stereotypes, and fuels cycles of offline violence. In response, internet shutdowns have been repeatedly employed as a means to contain unrest, raising serious concerns about their efficacy, impact on civil liberties, and broader socio-economic disruption. This article employs two theoretical frameworks to examine these developments. First, the Whac-A-Mole Theory captures the cyclical and ineffective pattern of content moderation efforts,

wherein extremist content and actors continually re-emerge despite repeated removals, challenging the sustainability of reactive state interventions. Second, Jurgen Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action provides a critical lens to understand how rational discourse is undermined in digital environments, leading to distorted communication, loss of mutual understanding, and weakened democratic deliberation. By situating these frameworks within the socio-political landscape of Manipur's ethnic conflict, the article argues for a paradigm shift from restrictive countermeasures toward a more holistic digital peacebuilding strategy. This includes fostering digital literacy, promoting inclusive dialogue, enhancing platform accountability, and safeguarding communicative spaces. Such an approach is essential for preserving Manipur's multicultural fabric and ensuring that digital infrastructures contribute to reconciliation rather than further division.

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