Mizo Studies Vol. 15 No. 03, pp. 184 -192
ISSN : 2319-6041
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https://doi.org/10.22232/mizostudies.v15i03.14

Women's Voices: Untold Story of Nurse K. Lalthansiami During the Rambuai Period in Mizoram (1966-1986)

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Abstract:

The Mizo National Front (MNF) declared independence from the Indian government on 1st March 1966, leading to two decades of chaos and turmoil in the region. This period, known as the Rambuai period (troubled time), was a watershed moment in the Mizo's history. Following 3 years of peace settlement between the MNF and India, there has been a significant increase in the publication of books focusing on the Rambuai period. However, a review of the existing literature reveals a strong emphasis on political developments and military operations, with limited attention given to the women and ordinary people in the movement.

In recent years, there has been a shift in feminist literature towards highlighting women's agency in times of conflict, moving away from a sole focus on victimisation. This shift is particularly relevant when examining the involvement of women in war or any independence movement, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of their experiences. By connecting this approach to social history and feminist theory through Ms K. Thansiami's personal stories, we will emphasise the recognition and amplification of women's roles and agency within Rambuai narratives. Also, the aim would be to give a voice to women. In this context, titi (unstructured conversation) was used for collecting data.

Keywords: *K. Lalthansiami, MNF, Rambuai, SF, Tualchhung volunteers*

Rambuai: A Short History

With the Mizo Hills being a district under the Assam Government on 23rd April 1952, the Mizo District faced several discontent, especially in terms of state and nation-building. The collective hardships experienced in social and political realms have gradually shaped the distinct characteristics of ethnic nationalism. Inadequate infrastructure, prolonged neglect in economic development, and political exploitation fostered a sense of disillusionment among the people, leading them to aspire for a shared vision of a better future. The evolution of ethnic movements reflects the process of selecting, standardising, and transmitting myths and symbols centred around revered figures and a glorified past, emphasising norms and traditions. This has contributed to ascribing a unique quality and character to the concept of 'Mizo-ness', as well as defining a specific homeland, thereby establishing a basis for self-determination as a nation or nationality (Chawngsailova 131).

The desire for self-determination among many Mizos became more pronounced with the establishment of the MNF on 22nd October 1961. The MNF advocated for full independence from India and garnered significant support from the Mizos. On the night of 28th February 1966, the MNF issued a twelve-point declaration outlining why they believed India was unfit to rule the Mizo people. On 1st March, the MNF began 'Operation Jericho,' a concerted effort to seize control in the Mizo district

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through armed rebellion. Innocent civilians were killed, women were raped, villages were burned, and atrocities were committed in different parts of the Mizo District. On 5th March 1966, two fighter jets of the Indian Air Force, French-built Dassault Ouragan fighters nicknamed Toofanis, and British Hunters were deployed to bomb Aizawl. Apart from Aizawl, different villages like Khawzawl, Pukpui, Vartekkai, South Mualthum, Tlabung, Hnahlan, Sangau, Bunghmun, and Hmuntlang villages were raided simultaneously (Zama 34-75). In addition, under the provisions of the Defence of India Rules, 1 and the Assam Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1953, four distinct categories of the grouping of villages were introduced. Grouping of villages was carried out in three different phases, i.e., 1967, 1968, and 1972; out of a total population of 318,0 in 1970, a total of 236,1 or 82% was affected by the grouping system in Mizoram. (Nag 23-29)

On 3 June 1986, after 2 years of struggle, the MNF and the Indian government signed the 'Memorandum of Settlement'. The 20-year struggle made the MNF movement a pivotal moment in Mizoram's history. The period was also the tale of the Mizo people, who passionately preserved their traditions and whose fighting spirit was still nourished by legendary past warriors.

A Call to Action: Women Responding to the MNF's Need for Medical Support

The ideological appeal of nationalism and the desire to fight for the nation inspired many to join the MNF. At the First General Assembly of the MNF held on 22nd October 1963, four resolutions were passed; one stating, 'The MNF party shall adopt non-violent means in its effort to gain freedom' (Lalbiaktluanga 75). Despite this, the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV) were recruited in October 1963, and by 1965, MNV Battalions were formed in most regions, with around 5 battalions and approximately 15,0 volunteers registered. On 15th February 1964, the MNF President, Mr Laldenga, declared, 'We would not use violence in our struggle for freedom. However, even a crab when cornered in its burrow would not hesitate to use its pincers to defend itself; similarly, we will seek shelter to avoid getting wet'(Lalrawnliana 41). Following this, 2 MNVs received training in East Pakistan. Additionally, the MNV conducted drills on the outskirts using firewood as rifles, with training provided by the disbanded 2nd Assam Regiment. It became evident that an armed revolt was imminent, and ambushes and exchanges of fire between the Indian Security Force (SF) and the MNF would become daily occurrences, thus resulting in casualties among civilians, MNF members, and the SF. Consequently, it became crucial for the MNF to have sufficient medical personnel with them. Therefore, obtaining medical training from experts and healthcare workers became a top priority. Since there were not enough medical experts among the MNF, it was impractical for them to personally train all the volunteers who were dispersed throughout Mizoram. To tackle their issue, the MNF leaders requested local medical workers to provide training to their volunteers, particularly women. With patriotic zeal, many women answered the MNF's call regarding their opportunity to work and contribute to the MNF's fight for independence. Ms K. Thansiami was among the many women who answered the call of the MNF. She was often called at Chhiahtlang in the MNF Sub-Headquarters, where CO Laldenga was the leader. After she finished her duty at the hospital, she would give first-aid training to the new women volunteers. Right before the beginning of the movement, women were important. This shows that women were also a much-needed cushion for preparing for the MNF movement.

A Nurse's Resolve: Standing Firm in the Face of Danger

With the beginning of the MNF movement on 1st March 1966, the non-stop operations of the MNF in the district and the decline in law and order, the Government of India invoked Article 3 of the Constitution and instructed the army to operate strictly to their duties. The Armed Forces Special Power Act of 1 was also in force in the district, granting powers to Assam Rifles personnel (above the rank of Havildar) to open fire, destroy arms dumps, and enter and search any place without a warrant. Although the MNF announced that they were in control and the SF would not reach Aizawl, with major arms, the SF destroyed obstacles on their way, and it took only a week to reach Aizawl. They did not show any hesitation or wisdom against the civilians. In fear, Aizawl was emptied and vacated by the residents.

With the help of Jet fighters, the SF gained control over Aizawl and marched towards different parts of the district to shut down the MNF.

Seema mentioned, "Women were usually associated with nurturing roles and depicted as 'wives, girlfriends, and mothers, waiting for soldiers to return and caring for wounded' (Shekhawat 25). However, evidence indicates that women also played significant and active roles, contributing far beyond these traditional depictions. Certainly, some victims fall into physical and sexual abuse, but generalising women as a whole as passive would overlook their desire to actively participate in the movement. Women within the 'home front' took grave risks ... which for the women was a demanding, risk-filled task (McAuliffe 114). On 9th March 1966, the SF arrived at Serchhip and settled at Chhiahtlang in the BRTF camp. Before the arrival of the SF, thlawhbawks (small houses) were constructed by each family within the forest as hiding spots, where they would take refuge in these shelters. During this period, Ms K. Lalthansiami was stationed at Nehru Memorial Hospital with three staff nurses, one doctor, Dr Thanglawma Hmar, three Health Workers/ANM, two pharmacists, three DAI, two IV Grade, a cook and a sweeper. Fearing the SF, all workers and patients also sought refuge and vacated the hospital. Only Ms K. Thansiami and a single patient, Ms Dengthuami, wife of contractor Piandênga, diagnosed with Tuberculosis (T.B.), were left. TB was considered a death-defying disease at that time. Due to its high level of contagiousness, TB patients were isolated. Being diagnosed with such a disease, Ms Dengthuami urged Ms K. Thansiami to depart and prioritise her safety. She said, "Siami, I have a contagious, deadly disease. I can't be around anybody else. So please, just leave me here." However, Ms K. Thansiami's reaction displayed great courage and was profoundly touching-

> As a nurse, I have conscientiously devoted myself to the care of patients in all circumstances. Your illness does not cause me to shy away, and there is no need for you to hold back from me. Let us seek solace in prayer, and if the SF comes to us, I am prepared to face death alongside you. You need not worry about anything, as I am committed to staying by your side.

Ms K. Thansiami, guided by her commitment to patient care, chose to stay with her. She persuaded the patient to accompany her to the quarters for safety. During this time, the village remained eerily quiet, devoid of its usual signs of habitation. That night, the SF ventured out from their camp for patrol. Noticing light emanating from the hospital quarters, they swiftly approached the quarters. While the SF aimed their guns through the windows and forcefully entered the premises, Ms K. Thansiami displayed remarkable courage by calmly opening the door. As she did so, the commander aimed a gun directly at her chest. She calmly said, 'You are welcome, come in.' She demonstrated remarkable composure while negotiating with the SF, and upon seeing her uniform displayed on the wall, they displayed a heightened level of respect towards her. They even reassured her not to fear anyone. She kindly offered them water and invited them to rest in the sitting room. In doing so, she effectively ensured the safety of her patient. Ms K. Thansiami said, "Despite all danger, I choose to keep my oath of nursing by not leaving behind my patient even under dangerous circumstances. So, I stayed with her and courageously faced the SF,"(K. Thansiami).

Dr T. Hmar, Ex-Medical Officer in the Nehru Hospital, Serchhip, stated, "Smt. K. Thansiami performed her duty bravely. While she was serving under me in that Hospital, I have all the praise for her courage in staying with the Hospital patients despite all the danger. I cannot help but admire her courage and devotion to her duty, even in danger of death. She has always been a faithful and trustworthy social worker during and after the disturbance period. She did well in her duty during the arrival of the SF, keeping an inmate of the Hospital in her quarters, looking after her. It is praiseworthy that we have such a nurse at such an important time and in trouble. Her courage and bravery in saving the inmates of the Hospital during the arrival of the SF is praiseworthy and deserves the highest commendation, where all the other staff had vanished."(Dr. T. Hmar)

After her short-term post in Serchhip, she was again taken back to Aizawl Civil Hospital. While she was working in Aizawl Hospital, she rented a house at Dawrpui, performing several tasks, helping the MNF in and outside the hospital. As she had a good relationship with the wife of Assam OC of Aiza-

wl Jail, Mr Saikya, she bailed several prisoners from Aizawl Jail by giving a positive rapport to the OC about the prisoners. Mr. Lalromawia, the former MLA of the MNF, even acknowledged that her efforts in serving the people surpassed those of the elected representatives themselves. (K. Thansiami)

With the lack of proper management in the jail, there was an inadequate provision of food and hygiene. Furthermore, the injured and ill inmates did not receive appropriate treatment, leading to their frequent transfer to hospitals for medical care. Subsequently, these hospitalised prisoners were guarded by the SF and often discharged without completely healing due to pressure from the SF. Realising the situation, Ms K. Thansiami made every effort to ensure that patients received the necessary care and attention to facilitate their complete recovery from their injuries or illnesses. She advised the Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife (ANM), who assisted the staff nurses, to indicate on the patient form that the patients had a high fever, even if they did not, to allow them ample time to recuperate and regain their health while in the hospital. For a long time, she was able to do this kind of practice, but, since not all the hospital staff were supporters of the MNF, her practice reached the department head, where she was given a letter requesting an explanation for her actions" (K. Thansiami). However, this does not stop her action for supporting the MNF. Along with Mrs Lalhmingthangi and Mrs Biakzami from the Civil Hospital, they surrendered as MNF Tualchhung volunteers and worked as informants for the MNF. They received important notices from the MNF, and Mrs Lalhmingthangi would type them out. During curfew hours at night, they would venture out to stick these notices in public areas. Following their surrender as Tualchhung volunteers, they increased their involvement with the MNF and the local community by intensifying their work from home.

Silent Strength: Ms Thansiami's Heroic Journey to Save Lives

Violent encounters between SF and the MNF swelled the number of injured militants who could not be taken to hospitals for fear of arrest. In this kind of situation, medical personnel who are willing to attend to the wounded militants are highly required. However a critical situation where anyone involved in helping the MNF could be seized, one needed to be brave enough to stand out in this kind of situation. In Philippine resistance against the Japanese, Filipina nurses and doctors such as Bruna Calvan, Carmen Lanot, and Dr Guedelia Pablan would continue to help civilians, soldiers, and POWs in the region surrounding Bataan despite the loss of their hospital and lack of supplies and food risking their lives to smuggle medicine into POW camps and maintain their self-constructed health centres (nipa huts), Filipina guerrillas and female resistance supporters helped not only to physically heal the wounded but strengthened community and soldier morale to fight against the Japanese Imperial Army (Salinas). In such a situation in the MNF movement, Ms K. Lalthansiami stepped out from her hospital duty, taking leave to help the wounded MNF. On 4th June 1967, the MNF attempted an ambush against the SF between Muallungthu and Tachhip. Their plan failed as the SF arrived earlier than they expected and faced casualties. L/Cpl. Sapdala died, and Cpl. Lianzama, Cpl. Lalzuithanga and L/Cpl. Thantluanga Taiwo were injured. Since there was no proper treatment available at the MNF camp at Hualngo, where the injured persons were taken (C. Zama), the MNF sent a runner to Dr. Lalthanliana, a doctor at Aizawl Civil Hospital. The runner delivered a letter to Dr Thanliana, stating, '...if you cannot come, send Ms Thansiami, who is as capable as you...' Dr Thanliana convened a meeting with his staff and explained the situation, stating, "The road between Aizawl and Hualngo is likely filled with SF. I don't think it's wise to attempt the journey." Ms K. Thansiami was furious with the decision of doctor and decided to go to the camp herself. She crafted a story about looking after ill family members in Durtlang to secure three days of casual leave, thus following the runner to treat the injured MNF at Hualngo. During her journey, she was inevitably stopped by the SF who inspected her bag containing a significant amount of various medications. After asserting that she was a nurse taking care of her family and required the medications, she was permitted to continue. After arriving at Hualngo, she was met by MNV, who guided her to the camp where she provided care for the sick and injured. To return before her leave ended, she left her remaining supplies with the two nurses at the camp and made her way back to Aizawl (K. Thansiami)

With women being more naturally peaceful, they were often enlisted to carry out perilous acts. Rohan Gunaratna stated that women are the preferred choice for deadly tasks because, 'first, women are less suspicious…' Women can use their gender to avoid visibility on several fronts. Their non-threatening nature prevents in-depth scrutiny at the most basic level, as they are simply not considered important enough to warrant investigation. On her return, Mr Lalnundawta, a renowned figure among the MNF, assigned Ms K. Thansiami a challenging and perilous task. At that time, there were Kawktu (pointers) who assisted the SF, posing challenges to the MNF and their supporters. One of the prominent Kawktu at that time was named 'Hming Kawka.' To create suspicion that he was assisting the MNF, a plan was devised to trap him. The MNF wrote a letter requesting 'Hming Kawka' to send at least 4 kg of rifle ammo, as they had run out. The letter was placed in an envelope along with the rifle ammo. The intention was to drop the envelope near the SF outpost. As mentioned earlier, during this time, Ngaizêl and its surrounding areas were heavily monitored by the SF as it served as an entrance to Aizawl. Ms K. Thansiami, fully aware of the significant task ahead, concealed the envelope inside her bra. She recalls-

> Carrying the ammo was nerve-wracking as it was evident that the SF would thoroughly inspect me at Ngaizêl. However, it started drizzling just as I reached Ngaizêl. Before undergoing inspection, I quickly sought permission from the SF to take refuge in their outpost due to the rain. They promptly provided me with a towel to dry myself. During that time, my heart raced as the ammo pressed against my chest. Fortunately, I was not subjected to inspection and managed to pass through the gate. (K. Thansiami)

She completed her assigned task and dropped the envelope at the Brigade. Ms K. Thansiami shows women's visibility and active participation, demonstrating that women stepped out of their homes to engage in the movement. It was clear that although many women were confined to domestic roles and childcare during the MNF movement, they were prepared to be directly involved if necessary.

K. Thansiami: Incarcerated due to her actions

Providing shelter, preparing food, and hosting them as guests were some of the activities women competently performed to support the MNF in the independence movement. With the tangible backing of the MNF, Ms K. Thansiami's leased residence in Dawrpui evolved into a consistent gathering spot for the MNF. Numerous MNF members who were granted bail or parole, and were required to report in at the police station, resided in her home, where she generously provided for them without expecting anything in return. She stated, "My mother was concerned about the potential risks of continually assisting the MNF without receiving any benefits. She even advised me to refrain from involvement with the MNF," (K. Thansiami).

Despite her mother's advice, she continued her work with the MNF. Indian Intelligence closely monitored her, waiting for an opportunity to accuse and apprehend her. Even under such strict surveillance, the MNF persisted in holding its meetings at her house. It was during one of these meetings that they planned to kidnap several District Officers, who were ready and fully equipped with arms. However, their plans were foiled when Mr Lalkima, the town duty, accidentally fired a pistol, causing the MNF to flee, leaving behind all their arms. Ms K. Thansiami narrates, "To conceal the weapons, I quickly wrapped them in my nurse uniform and brought them to ASI Mr Neihliana's quarter in Saron Veng. Unfortunately, I was followed by the SF, where I was arrested in June 1 and sent to Jorat Jail," (K. Thansiami).

She was imprisoned in Jorhat Jail until 1 (out on parole most of the time) under D.I. Rules on 15.7.1967, Prevention Detention Act, 1 and after a lapse of eight months, the criminal charges under I.P.C. section 121, 384, 302, 3 and 4 and 3 (5) and 4 (5) D.I.R.

Sisters in Peril: The Fight for Dêngzîki's Daughters

After Mizoram achieved Union Territory status, Ms K. Thansiami was freed from prison. Despite being captured and detained for an extended period, she actively engaged in various activities for the benefit of the people and the MNF. Even after achieving UT, the SF continued to detain individuals

without exemption based on age or gender; youth, the elderly, mothers, and women. Consequently, jails continued to be overcrowded with political prisoners, and various SF camps were filled with civilians detained on suspicion. Determining the whereabouts of those detained was a challenging task. Many VCPs played a crucial role in tracing and securing the release of their villagers. Ms K. Thansiami was also deeply involved in locating missing persons whom the SF had seized. On the night of 22nd March 1973, at 9:0 p.m., a traumatic incident occurred for the family of Ms Dêngzîki. Five men, disguised as civilians, forcibly entered Dêngzîki's residence. At gunpoint, they mercilessly dragged out her daughters, Lalrinsângi and her younger sister Lalthanzâmi. Mrs Lalrinsângi said, "It was a night, and we were transported to Bâwngkâwn Brigade Headquarters by an Army vehicle. We were forced to spend that terrible night of 22nd March 1973, at the Brigade Headquarters"(Lalrinsangi).

On 23rd March, the following day, Ms Dêngzîki, filled with fear and anxiety, approached Ms K. Thansiami for assistance. She recounted the events of the previous night and pleaded for help in locating her daughters. Hearing the distressing account, Ms K. Thansiami dedicated the entire day to searching for the two sisters, visiting various potential locations. She eventually found them around 4:0 p.m. at the Brigade Headquarters Army Office in Bawngkawn. Ms K. Thansiami recalled:

> At around 4 p.m. that day, I reached the SF quarter guard in Brigade Bawngkawn. Mr Khawvêlthanga, whom I know was there, and he searched all the bunkers within the quarter guard. During my parole from jail, I was a contractor under PWD, using my father's name. I worked on the construction of their cinema, which allowed me easy access to the camp. (K. Thansiami)

With the help of Mr Khawvêlthanga, she knows the whereabouts of the two sisters. After discovering that the two sisters were in the custody of the SF, she bravely approached the concerned SF Officers. She argued that they should not detain civilian women, who were her relatives, and that no law permitted the SF to forcibly detain innocent women in their quarters. She told them that their mother, Dêngzîki, came to her, worried and begging for their release and told the SF that she came to take them home. An agreement was reached, and both girls were taken back to their residences around 7 or 8:0 p.m. that night (K. Thansiami). Mrs Lalrinsangi stated, "It was the most harrowing experience of my life. The courageous rescue of my younger sister, Lalthanzami and me by Smt. K. Thansiami, who risked her life for our safety, is deeply appreciated. Her fearless sacrifice was truly extraordinary," (Lalrinsangi).

Ms K. Thansiami's brave intervention saved the two sisters from potential harm. However, on that night, the SF highly suspected Ms K. Thansiami of still working for the MNF due to her actions. They immediately went to her house to arrest her. Having been arrested and jailed before, she was not afraid of the SF, as she was clear about her rights. Without hesitation, she questioned the SF, "Why do you always arrest me? This is the third time! What is the purpose of arresting me?" However, the SF did not heed her words and took her away by truck to the Leitan Army Camp. Ms K. Thansiami recalled, "Captain S was called upon to interrogate me. But I never tried to give up against the SF anymore..." (K. Thansiami) She consistently demonstrated resilience against the Captain. They interrogated her in the office. Around 8 pm, they informed her that she was arrested because she had received a letter from the MNF. In such situations, many would choke with fear, contemplating the consequences of their letters being intercepted. But Ms K. Thansiami was different. Her ultimate aim was to challenge the SF. She boldly said, "If a letter is sent addressing me, it should be given to me and not kept by you." She continued, "I am a civilian, and if I have done anything wrong, you should hand me over to the Magistrate. I am a female, and there is no female attendant in this camp. If you detain me for 2 hours, I will report to the Ministry of Home and file a case. If you touch me even with a single tip of your hand, I will report directly" (K. Thansiami).

After stages of interrogation, they placed her in quarters where she was to receive VIP treatment. However, she did not intend to stay at the camp for more than 2 hours. After 2 hours, she began writing a report on the cover of a toothpaste box. Fearing repercussions, a Jonga jeep was arranged to take her home. Along with her, Mr. Bawihkapa and Mr. Ruata were also seized. Seizing the opportunity of her victory over the oppressor, she demanded the release of the two detainees. She insisted, 'If you

are releasing me, you should also release Mr Bawihkapa and Mr Ruata, who are not affiliated with the MNF. If you don't let them sit in the Jonga first, I will not go.' Consequently, they were all released together (K. Thansiami) During different stages of interrogation, women had the opportunity to exercise their agency. Ms K. Thansiami demonstrated a sharpened resistance against the oppressor. The acts of Ms K. Thansiami clearly show that women were not merely passive supporters of male-dominated ideologies.

Women's Agency in the Face of Adversity:

Women's agency is essential for the survival of ethnic patriarchal power. Although women were often limited to domestic chores, it is evident that, despite adhering to male hegemonic roles, they felt as capable as men, aside from some biological differences. Ms K. Thansiami's experiences indicate that the defined gender space often led to the reallocation of gender roles. This allowed women to heroically assume the role of protectors, traditionally considered a masculine role, within their own space (Hmingthanzuali, 220).

On 29th May 1979, 1 political and criminal prisoners from the District Jail in Aizawl were being transported to court for trial. The prisoners were loaded onto a specially designed prison truck, with a barrier separating them from the entrance. Only one SF officer was accompanying the prisoners, while five others were stationed outside the barrier. As they passed Dawrpui Presbyterian Church, a confrontation broke out between the prisoners and the SF. The prisoners attempted to seize the SF's firearms. During the altercation, the prisoners managed to obtain two guns from the SF. Additional SF personnel arrived at the scene and engaged in a firefight with the prisoners. Tragically, one MRP Constable and five SF officers lost their lives, while some prisoners sustained injuries, and four SF officers were also injured. Following the incident, the prisoners were forcefully removed from the truck and were physically assaulted by the SF. It was only after the intervention of CM Brig. T. Sailo and Minister C. Chawngkunga stated that the SF had ceased their actions. The injured prisoners were taken to the Aizawl Civil Hospital, where those requiring immediate medical attention were treated in the casualty ward, while others were confined in the General Ward under heavy SF guard. The ward was too small for all of the prisoners, and some prisoners were forced to sleep on the floor or of any other convenient places. Despite being in the General Ward for over two hours, the prisoners were denied proper medical treatment beyond the initial first aid they received. The SF closed all the windows and even the ventilation, disrupting the duties of nurses and sweepers. Each prisoner was guarded by three SFs. Even the seriously injured prisoners were handcuffed and tied to their beds. The SF closely inspected them with loaded guns and bayonets, with orders to shoot anyone who moved or asked anything from the nurse. Family members and other visitors were not allowed to visit the injured. The guards even attempted to shoot at nurses who came to relieve their colleagues. The SF freely moved inside the ward, opening not only the lockers of injured political prisoners but also those of other patients. They occupied the tables and chairs meant for nurse duty. Mr J. Lalhmuliana, who was one of the victims, stated, "In our ward, there were many other patients with serious conditions, most of whom had undergone major operations. As the guards closed the windows and ventilation, some patients began to collapse. The braver patients tried to call the nurse and doctor, but they were afraid to enter the ward as the guards threatened to shoot them. We were left to die."

At this critical hour, Ms K. Thansiami, whose duty was from 4:3 PM to 7:3 AM, arrived. She was detained and threatened with being shot, but she bravely confronted the guards, stating that it was her duty to care for the patients and that the hospital would be responsible if any patient died. She entered the ward, bringing relief to the patients, who felt their injuries were somewhat healed by her presence. Observing the dire conditions, she ordered the ventilation and some windows to be opened as patients were nearly suffocating. The commander of the guards accused her of helping the prisoners escape and threatened to shoot her again, pointing guns at her wherever she went. Nurse K. Thansiami remained remarkably composed and fearless. She said, "If you intend to proceed with shooting, I am not fearful in the least. However, are you attempting to harm all the critically ill patients?" Ms K. Thansiami described the dire conditions of the patients, who were restrained to their beds, and questioned the Commander

on how they could escape. She emphasised that the hospital bore the responsibility for the admitted patients, not anyone else. Demonstrating remarkable bravery, she declared that she would sacrifice her life if it meant saving the patients. She opened the ventilation, thereby rescuing critically ill patients from the harsh treatment of the SF. J. Lalhmuliana, one of the patients, remarked, "I want everyone to recognise her bravery and dedication to the patients. It was commendable to have such a nurse, and I witnessed firsthand how she deserved the highest praise. We are grateful and proud to have had such a courageous woman among us. Those who were in the ward will always remember her" (J. Lalhmuliana).

In conjunction with the domestication of the public sphere, there was a parallel process of politicisation within the domestic sphere. For many women, nationalism permeated the household, establishing a close association between the nationalist movement and the nationalist household. With villages being grouped, a significant challenge faced by impoverished families in Mizoram was the difficulty in accessing proper medical care. The high cost of medication and other charges rendered necessary treatments nearly inaccessible. For instance, in the 1970s, labouring in Durtlang Hospital cost an exorbitant Rs. 200/-, making it unaffordable for most families. Additionally, widespread cases of vomiting, diarrhoea, and malaria led to the deaths of many infants, further exacerbating the healthcare crisis. To improve impoverished men's and women's social standards, she established a nursing home with two beds in her residence at Durtlang, entirely at her own expense. Since 1983, she has also organised sterilisation camps at her residence in Durtlang Village (Lalzikpuii). Sixteen women have successfully undergone sterilisation procedures at her home, all free of charge. She consistently refused to charge the poor, providing them with all necessary aid and meals during their stay. None of the recipients reported complaints or grievances regarding their sterilisation procedures.

Conclusion

The MNF movement marked a significant period in Mizo history, with multifaceted implications that are evident in numerous historical accounts. Women, often portrayed solely as victims, played a significant but overlooked role in Mizo Rambuai's discourse and narratives. Though there have been a few writings that focus on MNF women volunteers who went underground, the narratives of those who supported the MNF from the home front, who were known as Tualchung volunteers, remain silent. However, Ms. Thansiami's experiences vividly illustrate that silence should not be mistaken for absence. It is essential to emphasise the importance of understanding and appreciating the various ways in which women display strength and resilience in conflict situations. Women frequently face complex challenges, strive for survival, adapt to sociocultural changes, and play crucial roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They are also actively involved on the front lines, engaging in various spheres and working towards positive change. They supported the MNF by participating in intelligence work, feeding and sheltering the underground members, acting as runners, and nursing the injured—both MNF members and civilians— in homes and hospitals. Their multifaceted involvement was vital to the movement's efforts.

When women choose to participate in a war or an independence movement, they exhibit a unique form of bravery. They not only confront the dangers of battle but also challenge the negative perceptions, including their own, of those who doubt their ability to endure the hardships of war. Women like Ms. Thansiami, who represent countless others with similar experiences, willingly put themselves in harm's way to make valuable contributions and therefore deserve our utmost respect. She did everything she could for the people, land and nation. Due to her five-year imprisonment, her employment was disrupted. Although she was initially entitled to a pension as a Deputy Director, she receives a pension as an Assistant Nursing Superintendent. She said, "Although my contribution to Mizoram remains largely unknown, they surpass those of many who publicly identify as MNF volunteers. I sacrificed everything for my nation" (K. Thansiami).

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