

Violence Representation In Manipuri Films: A Qualitative Content Analysis

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Abstract

Since the dawn of the motion picture, violence has been depicted extensively. Moreover, multiple scholars and researchers have examined, debated, and researched its consequence and preponderance in many fora; the dreadful acts illustrated in films harbor spectators brooding about their influence. Many scholars have studied selecting films churned out by giant film industries such as Hollywood and other big production houses from different countries. Nonetheless, only a handful of deconstructions have been executed on regional languages films, broadening a considerable void to fill. This paper analyzes how violence has been represented in Manipuri language films. To achieve the objective, the researchers have chosen five Manipuri feature films employing the purposive sampling method and analyzed them to comprehend the pattern and style of violent content portrayal employing the Qualitative Content Analysis method propounded by Margrit Schreier. The study finds that different forms of violence such as physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and verbal abuse have been portrayed in most films. It has also been found that the primary victims of the violent acts are civilians, and most of the violent acts were carried out by security forces, miscreants, and insurgents. The study finds that the film spotlighted the lamentable conditions of civilians and their survival route amid the mounting death threats, torture, false allegation, bomb attacks, and numerous other forms of violence.

Keywords: Cinema, Violence, Manipuri Films, Qualitative Content Analysis, Representation Theory.

Introduction

Violence depiction in films has been dominant in various countries, and numerous scholars have analyzed the films' contents to comprehend how violent settings are positioned while constructing connotations. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either result in or has a high likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (Krug EG et al., 2002). For the first time, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) started rating and assigning PG-13 (Parents Strongly Cautioned) levels in their movies in 1985 (Bleakley et al., 2014). The paper explored 390 films from 1985 to 2010 and found that 90

percent of films have the main character involved in violence. The Hindi film industry churned out many films with violent content since the exhibition of the first feature-length film in 1913. Around 60 years after India's first feature film premiered, Manipur, one of India's eight northeaster states, rejoiced in the birth of Manipur's first feature-length film in 1972. The state witnessed thousands of Manipur films after that historic event. The stories of the movies range from family drama to violence to insurgency issues and many more. Furthermore, the films touched upon the changing trends of Manipuri society and its issues. In addition, the adaption of various famous writings added more quality to the cinemas. Though most feature-length films come under the fiction category, those films more or less depicted the people's lives during the period. From non-fiction to fiction, Manipur

produced many films infused with the stories of violence. Haobam Pabankumar's *AFSPA 1958* (2006) and Ningthouja Lancha's *Mami Sami* (2008) may be given as concrete examples of violence portrayed in Manipuri cinema. Haobam Paban's film encapsulates the horror that Manipur's residents have suffered for quite a long time due to the controversial AFSPA. For 16 years, human rights activist Irom Sharmila protested to remove the act from Manipur. Haobam Paban's film indirectly or directly supports, encourages, exalts, or propagates Sharmila's Mission as a matter of fact (Bidur, 2007). Reviewing the film *Mami Sami*, Wahengbam (2015) writes that the cinema excelled in representing the present mami sami (blurring) Manipur, where ordinary people lost little freedom in their little world while confronting the big and powerful. Over the years, Manipur witnessed armed conflict, insurgency issues, and counter-insurgency measures that have primarily affected the lives of common people. The violence is not restricted to grown men or women; children have witnessed and experienced the same as adults. Pereira et al. (2016) write that violence and fear have become a basic feature of Manipur politics and societal realities, and children are rarely excluded from the most brutal violence during armed conflict.

The celluloid, video, and digital format of Manipuri films cover or portray violent events and incidents in the state of Manipur. It is universal that different countries or regions faced unwanted issues and have been represented or captured through various fiction and non-fiction cinemas. Many researchers have done multiple studies on this problem. Given the reasons, the violence depicted in Manipuri-language films needs to be analyzed to understand the characteristics better.

South African anti-apartheid activist and its first president Nelson Mandela comments that the twentieth century will be remembered as a century marked by violence (Mandela, 2002). Individuals have experienced different forms of violence and myriad intensity throughout life. And it, more or less, affected victims with numerous psychological and behavioral problems.

To a certain degree, films produced in different regions of the globe represented all forms of

violence, from physical to verbal and sexual violence. The 9/11 incident in the US of America has inspired many non-fiction and fiction films. Similarly, different countries made innumerable films based on the actual events of violence that had happened or are happening in their respective territory. Be it in Bollywood or Hollywood, many films depict violence. To name a few, Bollywood films such as *Bandit Queen*, *Ghajini*, *Matrubhoomi*, *Gulaal*, *Gangaajal*, and Hollywood films such as *Django Unchained*, *Taxi Driver* (1976), *300*, *American History X*, *Rambo*, etc. portrayed violence. Various scholars have analyzed these films. For example, Srivastava (2009) studied the Bollywood film *Rang De Basanti* to find the representation of violence and its relationship with patriotism. The researcher tried to understand the justification of violence by comparing the film with Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film, *The Battle of Algiers*. Many scholars have studied the representation of women and men, and its structure in violent films and the objectification of women in films has been discussed for a long time. Kelly (2016) analyzed the *Teeth* (2007), pointing out the representation of male violence with women portrayed as victims. Similarly, Wolf (2013) analyzed the modes and styles of representing gendered-based violence in audio-visual mediums, including film, news reporting, and advertising. The researcher explored the representation of women being stereotyped as victims while males are positioned as dominators. In addition, the researcher also commented that sexist violence had been normalized through visual representation in mainstream media. Acquaye (2022) analyzed the types of violence portrayed in Ghanaian films and concluded that the representation of violence against women seen in the film reflects the reality of society.

Adopting a different methodology, Hafeez (2016) analyzed Bollywood movies containing visuals depicting crime scenes and violence against women, comparing the films' contents with real-life incidents reported in newspapers over four decades. Ramasubramanian & Oliver (2003) also chose nine films to study sexual violence in Hindi films and found that moderate to severe sexual violence was shown in the movies and all the films depicted women as victims. To understand how women comprehend when they see violence in cinema,

Weaver (1995) divided 91 women into fourteen groups and let them opine and interpret visuals depicting violence against women by showing them film that contains violence against women narratives. The researcher tried to analyze the different women's opinions about the content when they relate to it in real-life events. In his analysis of Spanish cinema, Rico-Albero (2008) learned that Spanish filmmakers have started adopting the style of violence shown in Hollywood films, including historical events filled with killing, brutality, assault, mass killing, etc., to remind the audience that a peaceful life is all human desire.

Many researchers have discovered that women tend to be the victim and males the abuser or assaulters, highlighting the male dominance. In his analysis, Clark (2004) explored violence represented in an Indonesian film called *Kuldesak*, in which the researcher analyzed the gender inequality and portrayal of masculinities, stressing the importance of examining from the perspectives of the male angle, contesting the view of the pro-feminist perspectives. French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard has consistently infused violent scenes in their films, and the most concrete examples would be *Contempt*, *Breathless*, and *Pierrot le Fou*, to name a few. Fletcher (2019) discussed Godard's *Le Livre d'image* to explore the representation of violence. He stressed that the film, translated to English as *The Image Book*, did not limit to the picture of violence but constitutive violence of representation.

The heart wrenching 9/11 attack by al-Qaeda was one of the most ferocious attacks on American soil. Hundreds of films have churned out surrounding the attack. To understand whether the incident affected or changed the narrative films while portraying terrorist violence, Jung (2010) analyzed three action-oriented films produced post the 9/11 attack. Not only Hollywood movies, but various scholars and authors have also studied a wide range of foreign-language films. Barrow (2018) analyzed three Peruvian feature films between 1988 and 1991 to explore how the movie showed violence representing a specific time frame and real happenings by the filmmakers. In analyzing one film, Francisco Lombardi's *La boca del lobo*, the author maintained that the filmmaker, through the fiction film, highlighted the violent activities carried out to fight

insurgents to defend Andean inhabitants. Benson-Allot (2010) discussed the representation of violence and editing styles to subdue or increase the intensity by analyzing eight films by Kathryn Bigelow that have made the mark commercially and critically. War and its consequences have been portrayed in many films, and discussions on accurate real-life representation have been discussed on many platforms. Nilsson (2014) discussed three films depicting Peru's internal conflict, employing discourse analysis. Different approaches, interpretations, and narrative techniques used by filmmakers in describing violent happenings, including war and conflict, have been discussed.

Interestingly, Acar et al. (2013) experiments on detecting violent scenes in films constructed with audio and visuals, stressing that children of specific age groups are not appropriate to watch violent content in cinema. The researcher compared certain audio and visual features and which feature makes violence representation more discriminative. Talking about the violence represented in films and spectators that viewed them, Brown (2013) discussed the notion that stresses the ethics of watching the violence portrayed in the movie and how the spectators make out of it and learn. Not just in cinema, the rise of OTT platforms has enabled filmmakers to make more TV series, and violence has been shown in scores of them. From Prime Video to Netflix, these OTT platforms offer various violent films and series. Though the making of TV series gained momentum in just the last few years, diverse television content has shown violence. Borges (2011) analyzed the Brazilian TV series *City of Men* and the film *City of God*. The researcher analyzed the differences in the content of the film and the TV series and also pointed out the closeness between the representation of violence in the series and actual life in Brazil. The author went on to comment that the drama is the juxtaposition of fictional drama and documentary based on the everyday life of favela residents of Rio de Janeiro who have experienced problems concerning violence and drug trafficking.

Objectives and Methodology

The primary objectives of this paper are to explore the different forms of violence portrayed in Manipuri films and establish the

primary victims and characters who mostly carried out the violent acts. The research is a descriptive one, employing the qualitative content analysis technique. The analysis has been guided by Stuart Hall's Theory of representation, where he mentioned that through various mediums, including films or television, media producers make meaning of the media products (Hall et al., 2013). For this study, the media products are the five films that have been randomly selected from the year 2004 to 2012. The films are *Reporter* (Surjakanta, 2004), *Bomb Gee Cheitheng* [English: Bomb Blast] (Tejkishor Kshetri, 2009), *Paachaa* (Bishwamitra, 2009), *Ahing Mamei* (Bimol Phibou, 2010) and *Shakhenbi Eteima* (O.C. Meira, 2012). As the data or the material for the analysis is the film text and given that the analysis is descriptive, the researchers have employed Qualitative Content Analysis, defined by Margrit Schreier (2012) as a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. Using the deductive method, the researchers first formed categories according to the objectives. The process starts with the researchers watching them many times and translating the Manipuri language to English. The data were then assigned their respective codes per the objectives through the coding frame. And it was followed by the data, assigning the data to the category for a better interpretation and presentation of the results. Finally, the results have been presented in the continuous text format.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Reporter

(Logline: Chingkhei, a journalist, faced the wrath of the security forces, even falsely dubbed as a murderer, as he tried to unearth various societal wrongdoings.)

The film *Reporter* poses a crucial question: will journalists furnish accurate information to the people under the state authorities' persistent threat, torture, and violence rained against them? Though freedom of expression is considered a fundamental right, journalists or even civilians are facing threats in exercising the right. Nevertheless, it is necessary to provide people with the information to ensure that they can make knowledgeable determinations regarding their lives and

societies, given the escalating momentum of violence and crimes (Bokova, 2014). If their lives are threatened, it will lead to a deficiency of reporting. In a study to analyze journalists living in India and Pakistan, Jamil & Sohal (2021) found a failure of authorities to protect journalists and their right to freedom of expression. The study's result was not surprising, given the news and reports people have witnessed over the years. India ranked 150 among 180 nations in Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index report of 2022. This film's violent content may be one of the grounds why this film was favored. Barstch and Mares (2014) executed a study on audience appeal in violent media and uncovered that people do not enjoy seeing bloodshed or watching someone be beaten but rather relish the feelings that come with it, such as suspense and thrill.

Reporter depicts the violence security forces have perpetrated against civilians, apart from the viciousness among civilians. Unfortunately, the portrayal of such acts seems to be normalized in Manipuri films. In 2004, when the film was produced, news reports about alleged fake encounters, killings, violence against women, rape, and the disappearance of civilians were among the prominent news that used to fill newspapers, radios, and TV channels' news segments. Though civilians yearn for a peaceful life, such events resulted in civilians taking the matter as an everyday event that cannot be prevented or controlled. Such perception is widespread, and people face violence and threat in most parts of the world.

Illustrating examples of various mass shootings that happened on the soil of the United States, Berdayes & Murphy (2016) opined that the value of life diminishes every day, and residents of the country are fed up with such acts of violence and what they desire is peace. Moreover, the authors studied commercial media and explored if they normalized violence and opined that media cultivates fear, hatred, and yearning for retaliations as typical attitudes among the people. Though their study is based on various incidents in the US, any individuals can explore the violence happening in real life and what has been represented in media, including films, in their respective regions. In the *Reporter*'s case, the use of excessive violence by security forces against civilians and

protesters has been highlighted from the film's first scene. Such incidents have also happened in real life. In the film, as punishments for deeds such as going out during curfew, police made civilians do frog jumps. Commuters are slapped and kicked for even wearing caps, showing the brutality of security forces. However, during that period, it is all considered normal. In real life, Manipur state police and commandos executed such activities, and people tend not to speak against them for the fear that their lives would be threatened. When such incidents happened frequently, people thought it typical of police to punish civilians that way.

Coming back to the film, when Chingkhei, the film's protagonist, a journalist, clicked the picture of what the police officers were doing, a police officer broke the camera. Then, Goroba, the police officer in charge, severely beat Chingkhei. The plight of journalists and police brutality have been highlighted in the film. These kinds of incidents have happened many times in the state. Haobam Paban's film *AFSPA 1958* is a concrete example that shows the brutality of security forces. In the film, when a journalist union started mounting pressure against the government, Goroba was instructed to be on good terms with Chingkhei, which Goroba did not like. He murmured: "I can just kill that reporter Chingkhei using a false allegation." Goroba's statement highlighted security forces' capabilities under the shield of *AFSPA 1958*.

Fake encounters carried out by the army and state police have been portrayed in the film. For example, a conversation with Chingkhei and a fellow reporter points to a fake encounter carried out by the army. Chingkhei read an army statement: "During an encounter, two insurgents were killed, but only two grenades were recovered from them." Chingkhei discussed how a cross firing would have happened without guns on the insurgent side, and residents of the nearby villages said they only heard four or five gunshots and not a lengthy encounter, which the army claimed to have been around two hours. Chingkhei continued that we should not publish news articles in the newspaper, the reports provided by the military since they continue to kill civilians for awards and promotions. In Manipur, security forces have always faced flak for utilizing extreme illegal, violent methods

against civilians and insurgents. In the name of fighting insurgency in Manipur, violence is legitimized by the state and committed by the Army personnel, Paramilitary forces, and Manipur Commandos under *AFSPA* (Sitlhou, 2020).

As a journalist, Chingkhei writes for the welfare of the people, and he wrote about rice agent Nimai's misappropriation of rice quota. Through the character of Nimai, violence among civilians for personal reasons has been portrayed. He planned and killed Leima because he was not happy with her. After the altercation regarding rice distribution the other day, he said: "Your time is over." His statement hinted that he would kill Leima. In the case regarding the misappropriation of rice, she was a crucial person since she stood against Nimai for that matter. After the demise of Leima, Chingkhei went to meet Nimai. Nimai told him that he had not met her for a long time, which Chingkhei recorded, and left the place. Later that day, Chingkhei was attacked by some identified persons suspected of being hired by Nimai.

In another case of violence between civilians: When Chingkhei and his colleague visited the DM College campus, one of the film's antagonists, Kumar, threatened Chingkhei for speaking with a female student, resulting in a fierce brawl between the duo. Violence against women has also been shown in the film. When Kula was unwell and had to undergo surgery, Memcha had to find Rs 5000. After Chingkhei's daughter-in-law gave her Rs 1000 after she learned that Kula was hospitalized, Memcha had to find Rs 4000 more. Kumar, assuring that he would provide Rs 4000 and asking her to come with them for a picnic, Memcha had no choice. Kumar then forced Memcha to drink coke, which he mixed with alcohol. Then, she was gang-raped by Kumar and his friends. On the next day, Memcha was found dead hanging on a tree.

Slapping false allegations and torturing civilians by security forces continued till the last scene of the film. When Chingkhei met Asha, OC Goroba arrived and arrested Chingkhei, alleging him to have raped and killed Memcha. No arrest warrant was given. Goroba mounted his revolver onto the head of Chingkhei and dragged him to a police vehicle.

In police custody, Goroba beat Chingkhei black and blue. OC Goroba has used extreme forms of violence. After it was learned that Chingkhei was not involved in the Memcha case, he was released. When he lost faith in the police to unearth the truth, he went to find Kumar, and then the duo started exchanging punches and kicks. After a while, Chingkhei shoved Kumar's face into a cinder patch and thought he was dead, but he stood up and pierced Chingkhei with an iron rod. Chingkhei struck back and killed Kumar by stabbing Kumar to death using a pen. The film highlighted the suffering of civilians at the hands of police violence. Violence against women has also been portrayed, including gang-raped. Moreover, killing among civilians has also been depicted in the film.

2. Bomb Gee Cheitheng

(Logline: A father and his son separated after a bomb blast and later reunited after around two decades, with the son evolving into a torchbearer of the rule of law.)

The film *Bomb Gee Cheitheng* (Bomb Blast) centered around the story of victims who have lost their loved ones in a bomb attack in Manipur's capital, Imphal. It also underscored the violence orchestrated by security forces and insurgents, apart from violence against women by villains. In the film, Loya is the Superintendent of Police of Imphal East district of Manipur, and the security forces, which Loya was a part, are pictured in a bad light since they beat, torture, and injure innocent civilians without any valid reason to do so. Chinglen, is one of the protagonists who works as a journalist. He faced violence, threats, and torture from insurgents and security forces for exercising his freedom of expression. This kind of situation is prevalent in India. For example, six journalists were killed in around three months, from September to November 2017, prompting the question of journalists' safety and security in covering and disseminating news in the world's largest democracy (Murthy, 2018).

SP Loya called an Inspector and asked if they had beaten some youth yesterday and told him that it was the son of IG's sister and they were well-educated youths. He then asked, "Why did you guys beat people without a proper reason? Go and apologize to them." He responded:

"Yes." A sub-inspector tried to normalize the torture against civilians by saying, "We did not beat them severely. Nobody bled. We just slapped them. What is the need for the police if we could not do so?" In reality, people have experienced such activities carried out by security forces. Moreover, the public has perceived their act as usual, given the frequency of their violent act. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Manipur state violates and threatens people's lives and freedom in a free society. In Manipur, arresting without a warrant, beatings, kidnappings (arresting and making youths disappear from their custody), manhunts, killings, rapes, etcetera are common (Kshetrimayum, 2017).

Violence against women is exhibited through two different characters. First, Tomba, who was drunk, started thrashing his wife, Ahanjaobi, by delivering smashes with his shoes on her face and back, alleging that she and her sister were trying to exhaust all his money. Then, he beat her and threw his wife and daughter out of his house. The second victim of violence against women was a representative of a women's welfare organization that tried to help Ahanjaobi, Tomba's wife. Thoibi, the representative, was called by Tomba's second wife, Ebetombi. Then, Tomba raped and killed her. Ebetombi was shown to be assisting his husband in disposing of the body of Thoibi. The two incidents showed violence against women, one under the influence of alcohol. In Manipur, drunk husbands beating wives and children is common in every locality. Despite being banned in the state, alcohol and drug use is common. Women are especially vulnerable to alcohol and drug-related violence, and there is a definite link between increased intake of alcohol and increasing violence against wives and children (Irene, 2005)

Insurgents are established to use extreme violence against civilians who committed heinous crimes. For example, Tomba was kidnapped by insurgents and tortured to know what had happened to Thoibi. After torturing him for a while, an insurgent shot him in his leg. Then, he started talking. Finally, he divulged having raped and murdered Thoibi, the representative of a women's welfare organization. The insurgent group shot him dead for his crime and left his body in a paddy field. Chinglen is one of the protagonists who

works as a journalist. Here the violence against journalists comes from both insurgents and security forces. When Chinglen writes about the insurgents' activities that have bothered the civilians, he is forcefully taken to the hills and beaten for writing against them. In another scene, police tortured Chinglen, alleging he worked as an insurgent by masquerading as a journalist. The police officer kicked him, pinned him on the ground, and tortured him. Both security forces and insurgents used violence to prevent Chinglen from writing against their respective works. Through Chinglen, the plight of journalists was portrayed in the film. He even wanted to leave the state as he could not face the torture of insurgents and security forces.

Violence, including the killing of civilians by security forces, has been portrayed through a discourse between the father of SP Loya and Loya himself. The father of Loya reads a newspaper article: "In an encounter with commando, three UGs died. One is said to a civilian." "One civilian died in the hands of security forces," he continued. Later the duo discussed the insurgency problems and the misdeeds of both security forces and insurgents. The scene highlighted the extreme form of violence civilians had to face. Insurgents are also portrayed to be intimidating civilians and demanding money. Moreover, they hurled grenades and killed civilians. In one scene, a politician berated SP Loya, saying that he has been hearing complaints about the police department's excess and unlawful activities of torturing civilians. "People of all sections condemned it. Police cannot go against the law. No civilians should be harmed."

3. Paachaa

(Logline: Ibotombi, an indigent, counters multiple tribulations as he strives to make a living and raise his nephew Yohenba to become a national-level cyclist.)

In most films, police are depicted as highly corrupted and did nothing for society without paying them an amount. They operate for baddies and unscrupulous politicians. On the other hand, a handful of police is pictured as brave and displays upright intrepidity and commitment to serve the people. In the film, Paachaa, physical violence such as hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, brandishing, and

using guns has been shown. The same is seen in Hindi cinema. Police employ the same tools to torture people. If the police are in the film, they mostly carry out violent acts against civilians or miscreants. The use of violence, especially torturing people, reinforces two notions in the minds of the audience, which are - torture is a natural act if the bad guys are beaten, and it is legit to torture, which Shaheen (1999) underlined to be the rationale why such acts of torture in police lock-ups are never questioned in real life. This *modus operandi* has been established distinctly through the character of Paachaa film's protagonist Ibotombi.

Police were depicted as goons who could be engaged in performing personal vengeance and other unlawful activities. They are shown to be government machinery attacking the civilians they ought to protect. Different scholars have dissected violence carried out by police. Linnemann (2017) critically analyzed the HBO series *True Detective* and other police stories and maintained that the contents exhibited, even in their most violent and corrupt forms, that the police are never beyond redemption. The author continued that police stories depicted their brutality and violence in the society they serve. The same can be seen in the film, Paachaa. Emotional violence, specifically accusing civilians of being associated with insurgents, has been portrayed in the film. Ibotombi was in a relationship with Ayingbi, the lead actress in the film. When the wealthy family of Nirben asks for Ayingbi's hand, the latter's father rejects it. To ensure Nirben gets married to Ayingbi, the former takes the help of her sister and his friend Dinesh, a Sub-Inspector at the Manipur Police Department's commando unit. Without any reason, Commando Dinesh arrived at the residence of Ibotomba and other constables and started beating him, alleging that he was associated with insurgents. He was blindfolded and threw at a police gypsy to take him away. When his nephew, Yohenba, pleaded the police officers not to take him, he was pushed to the ground and started booting. Commando Dinesh has been portrayed as a violent cop who tortures and damages a civilian's life and reputation.

Through the character of Dinesh, security forces have been portrayed to be intimidating, assaulting, and frightening civilians for their gains without any reason. The security

personnel alleges to have found a gun in Ibotomba's custody. A newspaper article reads: "Oinam Ibotomba of Khurai Soibam Leikai was arrested at home. A pistol and nine rounds of ammunition have also been recovered. Moreover, 50 thousand rupees and documents related to insurgents have also been recovered." On that pretext, he was tied to a chair and beaten severely, asking a question: "Where did the gun come from?" Commando Dinesh planned it to favor his friend Nirben, who wanted to marry Ayingbi. He was beaten black and blue to get their desired result. Punching him continuously, Commando Dinesh asked Ibotomba: "Which insurgent organization do you belong to?" Then, Dinesh started beating him and continued. The act highlighted the severe issue civilians have been facing in Manipur. The prolonged imposition of the notorious AFSPA has resulted in a large-scale violation of Human Rights in Manipur (Meitei, 2018).

Abduction and arrest have been synonymously used in the film. Moreover, it is no less than kidnapping. Like security forces arrested Ibotomba without any warrant or valid reason, an insurgent group was shown to have abducted Nirben, who paid SI Dinesh to torture and framed Ibotomba as an insurgent. He was abducted and taken away to an undisclosed location adopting threat and force. The insurgents threatened him to speak the truth; otherwise, they might use weapons to extract the information. An insurgent leader said: "Speak the truth; you have paid policemen to arrest Ibotomba, who was innocent." Nirben negated, saying he was not related to the incident. When Nirben continued to speak negatively, the insurgents started torturing and beating him. Later, he confessed to having committed the act of torturing Ibotomba since he wanted to marry Ayingbi.

Insurgents are shown to be capable of abducting and punishing those who have troubled society. Iboyaima and an engineer were captured in the hills for misappropriating public funds by a hill-based insurgent organization. The duo was about to be killed by the insurgents. Nevertheless, they were waiting for the village chief to decide whether or not they would be given capital punishment. After the village chief learned that Iboyaima was a younger

brother of Ibochouba, who did great work for their village, his life was spared.

4. Ahing Mamei

(Logline: A youth had to leave his home and family with a neighbor after being hunted by a group of hooligans who kept demanding a missing gun.)

Physical violence is shown in various parts of the film. The film commences with a scene wherein the main protagonist in the film, Paree, is attacked. The antagonist Kaoba and his team attacked Paree, which he defended defiantly, portraying the dominance of the protagonist. The attack and retaliation continued. Manipuri films focus on family drama and romance; however, they incorporate violence to achieve the climax. However, in world cinema, Hong Kong films are encapsulated with violence and relish a prominence worldwide for their action genres, of which violence is a component and inescapable aspect (Stephen Teo, 2011). Compared to Manipuri cinema, the representation of violence is quite different as gun violence has always been an integral part of Manipuri films. Hollywood violent movies have been scented with gun violence content. In a study by selecting 30 top films, Bushman et al. (2013) found that gun violence in PG-13-rated films have tripled since 1985. The film Ahing Mamei shows gun violence through miscreants and insurgents; no government authorities have been shown to control it.

In the Indian context, kidnapping, rape, and murder have been shown in films. These crimes happened in reality also. The National Commission for Women (NCW) received a total of 19,953 complaints of crimes against women from January to August 2021, up from 13,618 in the corresponding period of 2020 (PTI, 2021). The increase rate is 46 percent. This problem of violence against women is highlighted in the film. When Linthoi and Leima were on their way home, aides of Kaoba kidnapped Leima and tried to take her to an isolated place. On the way, one of the protagonists, Suraj, was relaxing and lying on his bike. When the team Kaoba asked him to clear their way, an altercation broke out, exchanging punches and kicks. Soon, Paree and Linthoi arrived. Then, Paree started beating them and having them run for their lives. Apart from Kaoba, Ratan Lai is one of the film's main

antagonists. He resorted to beating, torturing, threatening, and even killing civilians. For example, his team beat and assaulted a man in his introduction scene. Then, he tried to shoot and kill that man with a pistol, alleging that he was spying for insurgents. Then, a group of insurgents arrived and started firing, forcing the first team to run away.

While running, a member of Ratan Lai's gang left a revolver to Leima and said he would come back again to collect it. When Paree, Leima, and her mother were talking about the last night's incident, a member of Kaoba's team overheard their conversation. Then, one of his team members, masquerading as the gun owner, managed to get the gun. The civilians are shown to be intimidated by miscreants by leaving their weapons and troubled until it is not returned. After a few days, the gang of Ratan Lai arrived at Leima's residence and demanded the revolver. It happened at a time when Paree and Leima's mother were discussing the matter. When Leima's mother said the gun was already taken by one of their members, Ratan Lai said he had no other representative. When Leima's mother tried to get inside her home, one member of Ratan Lai's group started assaulting Paree. After striking a few blows against them, Paree went inside the house, pulled out a sword, and tried to attack them. The team had no other choice but to flee the area.

Miscreants are shown to be merciless to civilians. They had the quality of troubling and torturing people without any reason. The team Ratan returned following the incident. But this time at the residence of Paree. When Paree was not home, they started beating Paree's father. One man punched him in the face; then Ratan pulled out a revolver and buttstroke him to the ground. Again, he threatened to kill him unless Paree and Leima surrendered before the next day. Paree and Leima, fearing for their lives, left home and stayed away. However, the team Ratan kept coming to Paree's house. After a few days, they dragged Paree's father from his home and shot him dead when they could not find Paree. Paree could not go and perform his last rites as he might also be killed. Civilians are shown to be intimidated, tortured, and killed in the film.

Ratan's team attacked Paree and Leima again. Though Leima fled the scene, Paree kept combating with them. Then, Leima narrated the incident to an insurgent group that rescued her. The team Ratan captured Paree, tied him to a tree in a far-off place in the hills, started thrashing him, and asked where the gun was hidden. The torture and interrogation resumed. Then, Ratan, through a person, came to learn that Kaoba had taken the gun. So, his team hunted down him and got back their gun. In the process, Kaoba and his team were pummeled black and blue. Miscreants killing civilians and insurgents killing miscreants have been shown in the film. For example, the insurgent group who rescued Leima started looking out for Paree and later rescued him after killing a member of Ratan's team. After that, the insurgent group started hunting the Ratan team, killing one another. Finally, Ratan was abducted from an undefined location. He was taken to a jungle and shot dead.

5. Shakhbenbi Eteima

(Logline: An award-winning renowned writer Thanil has been writing extensively, appreciating the beauty of Manipuri women, but his struggles are at stake after he learned that his friend eloped with his wife.)

In the film Shakhbenbi Eteima, the form of acts of violence represented in the film includes violence against women, abduction, and intimidation. Thanil and Shakhbenbi were in a relationship, but their parents were against it because they were from the same clan. However, they eloped against their parents' will. Later, because of continuous emotional abuse by their parents of Thanil, the duo had to leave their homes and stay together in a rented room. Emotional abuse and verbal victimization are deemed to be a part of domestic and family violence. Shakhbenbi and Thanil had to face this. Abuse to daughters-in-law by mother-in-law and family concerning dowry is still in the news. In their study about violence between female in-laws in India, Rew et al. (2013) state that mothers traditionally enjoy power over their daughters-in-law, which is manifested in numerous everyday actions and verbal statements, while girls are socialized to accept rather than challenge these in India. But, the case is not the same in the film.

The capturing of women without their will has been recorded in ancient times in Manipur, and the woman was forced to get married for the fear that the society would call them *chelurabi* meaning woman who had eloped or stayed a night with a man. The normalization of forced consent is embedded in the social and cultural psyche of the Meiteis (Lisham, 2017). One of the violent activities depicted in the film is the act of attempted eloping without the woman's approval. In the case of Naobi, the sister of Shakhbenbi, she jumped off a running scooter because his boyfriend tried to take her forcefully. On learning the act, Shakhbenbi slapped Naobi's boyfriend. Shakhbenbi also faced a similar situation. She was taken to a far-off area from the city on the pretext of their job by Lambal. Since they were late, they could not get back home that day. The next day, when Lambal tried to persuade Shakhbenbi to be his wife, Shakhbenbi pulled out a knife and warned him not to come near her. In both cases, men attempted to capture women and get married.

While some insurgents are shown to be exemplary in the film, some are shown to be very fierce and harsh. However, both insurgent groups abduct people, threatening their lives, which is one form of brutality portrayed in the film. The insurgency issue in Manipur has sorrowed people, and counter-insurgency operations have caused collateral damage to civilians. Many have been killed in alleged fake encounter cases. Various scholars have discussed and commented on the issue. Singh (2015) stressed that the movement had given birth to various problems in socio-economic development. Moreover, the birth of insurgency is generally attributed to the signing of the controversial Merger Agreement in 1949 (Meitei, 2018). Authorities have been conducting various operations to uproot the insurgency issue till now.

In the film, insurgents are shown to be intimidating people if they do not pay their monetary demands. Thaballei works together with Lambal and Thanil, and her husband works in a government department at a high position. Two youths who claimed to have been sent by Ikhunai Kanba Lup's Luchinglembi visited the Thaballei's residence and met his husband. They threatened him by leaving a present that turned out to be a bomb. The family was shocked to learn that they had received

bombs as gifts, intimidation for not providing contracts to insurgents. Bomb threats have been depicted as violent activities carried out by insurgents, which have caused psychological problems to civilians.

In Manipur, there are different ethnic armed groups whose objectives are different; some groups demand autonomy from the states, some demand political objectives, and some have ethical issues as well (Dey, 2017). A group having ethical issues was shown predominantly in films; for example, in the film *Shakhbenbi Eteima*, kidnapping is shown in more than three scenes. In the last part, the daughter of Thaballei was kidnapped by a group called Ikhunai Kanba Lup, which was led by a woman called Luchinglembi. Their primary role is to extort money from civilians by threatening their lives. After the family of Thaballei did not pay their demands, her daughter Langlen was kidnapped. And she was taken to hilly areas blindfolded. The act of insurgents has caused trauma and disorders to both the captive and the family, showing the negative impact of armed conflict and insurgency issues. Hanjabam & Singh (2014) examined significant factors contributing to the mental health of people living in Manipur and concluded that protracted armed conflict is the major deteriorating factor. The family was unsure what to do. In the insurgent group, a guy named Tangba evolved into a good person who joined the group due to unavoidable circumstances. Tangba called Langlen's parents to pick her up at Ngariyan Chingkhong the next day and never said anything about the money. He was trying to free Langlen. Soon after the arrival of Langlen's parents, the police commando arrived and shot and killed Tangba on the spot. The violence portrayed on the security forces' part is killing insurgents without warning, even when insurgents opened fire.

Conclusion

The films displayed different forms of violence, predominantly physical violence against civilians by security forces. Four out of the five films depicted violence against women. The immediate victims of the violence in the five films are all civilians. Furthermore, the characters who executed violent acts were primarily insurgents and security forces. In the first film, *Bomb Gee Cheitheng*, security forces are portrayed as goons in uniform who batter

civilians for no reason. Their primary duty to safeguard people is a mockery. A bomb attack in the heart of Imphal, the capital of Manipur, was shown in the film, which was no less than a terrorist attack. Attack, assault, and killing among civilians have been portrayed in three of the five films. And police are shown to be not protecting them. Insurgents are shown to be the ones who punish bad people who are terrorizing civilians. The form of violence they employed consisted of beating, assaulting, shooting in the leg to extract information, and finally killing people. They also give capital punishment to those who committed crimes like raping women. Insurgents killed Thoiba in the film *Bomb Gee Cheitheng* for raping an activist. In the film *Ahing Mamei*, Ratan was shot dead by insurgents for killing the father of the Paree, the film's protagonist. Security forces and insurgents are shown to do violent acts such as kidnapping and intimidating people through bomb threats and death threats. Insurgents are shown to threaten people if they do not pay their monetary demands. Bomb threats and death threats are common. Mounting allegations of torture or killing civilians by security forces have been depicted abundantly. The kidnapping of children and demanding ransom has been shown in one film. In the movie *Paachaa*, security forces are shown to be government organizations that can be hired for personal purposes. To ensure Nirben gets married to Ayingbi, the former takes the help of her sister and his friend Dinesh, a Sub-Inspector at the Manipur Police Department's commando unit. Without any reason, Commando Dinesh arrived at the residence of Ibotomba and other constables and started beating him, alleging that he was associated with insurgents. He was blindfolded and threw at a police gypsy to take him away. When his nephew, Yohenba, pleaded the police officers not to take him, he was pushed to the ground and started booting by insurgents. Security forces are portrayed as monstrous characters who killed people without valid reasons or proper judicial proceedings. The utilization of disproportionate violence by security forces against civilians and protesters has been highlighted from the *Reporter* film's first scene. Transgression of human rights and unlawful acts such as fake encounters carried out by the army and state police have been portrayed in the movie. Violence among civilians for personal reasons has also been pictured in the cinema. Violence

drives the story of all five films portraying civilians as the primary victims. Moreover, all the films show the police's incapability to tackle violent acts such as rape and killings, resulting in insurgents and civilians taking the law into their own hands. Chingkhei, in the film *Reporter*, killed the rapist of Memcha. Most of the films showed insurgents and security forces in the same boat from the perception of civilians. Their violent acts have civilians living in a conundrum on how to survive. Violence and its effects on human society have been depicted in all five films.

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