Opposition Party and Electoral Politics

5.1 Introduction

Elections are very important for both the ruling and opposition parties. It is the elections, parliamentary or Assembly, which provides a political party or parties to capture power by securing majority by a political party or by forming coalition among the likeminded parties. One usually finds both the ruling and the opposition parties to be very active on the eve of elections. The ruling parties try to impress the voters by highlighting the achievements during the period of its rule. The opposition, on the other hand, may be said to be more active than the ruling parties on the eve of General elections. The main reason is that it is the main objective of the opposition parties to win elections by securing majority in the elections and form a new government. The opposition parties are very keen to point out the mistakes, the loopholes etc. committed by the ruling party or parties in and outside the Legislative Assembly. The opposition members including the leaders always started to prepare for the coming Parliamentary or Assembly elections by enrolling new members to the party, by highlighting important issues concerning the voters. The leaders, the members and the party workers of the opposition re-activate themselves to face the challenges of the coming elections.

5.2 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 1972-74

The Congress party was the main opposition party in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur, 1972. Though emerged as the single largest party, it was not able to form the government. It was the Manipur People’s Party which was able to form a coalition government with other
likeminded parties. The MPP led coalition government fell on 26th March, 1973. A mid-term election was held in February, 1974.

The Congress in the manifesto for the mid-term elections to the Manipur Legislative Assembly 1974 had criticized the Manipur People’s Party and its allies by saying that “regionalism and money power created havoc in the election atmosphere. No political party or organised front could capture absolute majority”.¹ “The one year rule of the unholy alliance demonstrated the internal weakness of the regionalist party by indulging in massive corruption, acts of nepotism and high handedness. The alliance flouted rules and regulations in appointments, transfers and promotions ignored all norms of decency and propriety of public life”.²

The Congress put forward its goal for the mid-term Assembly elections 1974.

a. Establishment of a stable government  
b. Uprooting of divisive and weakening tendencies like regionalism, linguism and all forms of communal biases  
c. Awakening the pace of industrial developments  
d. Providing employment to the masses, particularly to the educated and  
e. Checking the evils of price rise and profiteering.

The Congress again targeted the MPP by the assurance that the party will provide leadership and guidance to the younger generation towards the mainstream of national life discouraging unhealthy regional sentiments.³

The party in its manifesto also promised to establish a full-fledged University in Manipur. This might be in response to the establishment of

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¹ Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, Election Manifesto, 1974, p. 1  
² Ibid.  
³ Ibid., p. 3
the Centre of post graduate studies, Imphal under Jawaharlal Nehru University; New Delhi during the rule of MPP led coalition government under the Chief Ministership of Md. Alimuddin.

The Congress in its manifesto again appealed to the votes by reminding that the party as the unit of the oldest and the largest national organisation has a unique responsibility in Manipur. It has been the architect of all the major schemes and projects for the development of the state. In fact, the achievements in the field of education, power projects, medical and health services, small scale industries, roads and communications, effective decentralization of administration in the hill areas are the credits of the Congress organisation. In order to attract the attention of the voters, the Congress the opposition in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur, 1972-73 had promised to save Manipur from the grip of the destructive forces and to give purpose and direction to legitimate hopes and aspirations of the people. The Congress will provide a stable government, good administration free from corruption, quick pace in industrial development, employment to the masses and broader opportunities to participate in the mainstream of national life with self respect and dignity.

The Congress was the only organisation which had a strong base in the whole of Manipur, both valley and hill. The leaders and members of the party were very much dissatisfied when the party remained as opposition in the Legislative Assembly of 1972-73. The Congress leaders had infused new spirit and courage in the mind of party workers to win the support of the people. The selection of the candidates was done taking into account the socio economic and political situation of the constituencies, always keeping in mind, how to defeat the growing

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4 Ibid., p. 7
regional aspirations of the people, particularly the youths guided by the regional ideology of the Manipur People’s Party. The Party workers were trained under the control and supervision of the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee as well as the concerned candidates of the constituencies. The party workers of the Congress candidates had explained the political ideology of the party to the voters in street corner meetings, public meetings etc. the candidates and the workers of the party had highlighted. The party workers had also explained to the voters, particularly the youths, the political atmosphere and political situation in which the party was not able to form the government in 1972 though the Congress was the Single largest party.

The Congress had organised big rallies in order to show the strength and support base of the party. In the 1974 elections, the candidates in the urban areas (especially in the Imphal town) organised big rallies showing voting strength before 3 or 4 days of the election.5 The Congress entered into electoral alliance with the CPI in order to check/crush the rise of regional sentiments propagated by the local parties, the show of money power by a large number of independent candidates and supporters of the regionalist forces.6 The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi came to Manipur on 8th February, 1974 for election campaign. She addressed public meetings at Ukhrlul, Churachandpur, Thoubal and Palace Ground, Imphal.

The Congress party could not increase its strength in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur. Out of the 49 seats contested in both valley and hills of Manipur, only 13 candidates got elected. It is an indication that the Congress as an opposition in 1972-73 could not check the growing forces of the Manipur People’s Party having an ideology of

6 MPCC-Election Manifesto, op cit., p.7
regionalism. The Manipur People’s Party had emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly Elections, 1974. The Congress on the other hand, had reduced in strength in the Legislative Assembly from 16 in 1972 to 13 in 1974. Out of 16 Congress MLAs in 1972 only four MLAs got elected in the Assembly Elections 1974. They were S. Bijoy Singh from Jiribam constituency, Md. Habibur Rahman from Wabagai constituency, M. Ibotombi Singh from Heirok constituency and Kh. Ratha Singh from Bishenpur constituency. The remaining nine Congress MLAs were newly elected ones in the Legislative Assembly, 1974.

The Manipur People’s Party, though formed the government on 4th March, 1974, was in power only for 4 months. Due to rampant defection of the MLAs from one party to another, there was ministerial instability in Manipur during the period, 1974 to 1977. It was when the Janata party formed government at the national level in 1977 that there was again defection of the MLAs from other political parties joined the Janata party and formed Janata government under the Chief Ministership of Yangmasho Shaiza. There was conflict among the members of the Janata party. On 9th October, 1978, nine members of the Janata Legislative led by R. K. Dorendra Singh resigned from the Janata Legislative party and the Janata Party. Majority of them had joined the Congress (I). The strength of the Congress increased to 12. The Congress had launched Satyagraha movement on 11 September, 1978 demanding the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. The CPI which remained as the opposition party since 1977 had also demanded the resignation of Shaiza from Chief Ministership for declaring the whole of Manipur valley as a disturbed area. The opposition members belonging to Congress I and the CPI boycotted the Governor’s Address to the Assembly. In the meantime four

7 Kshetri Bimola, op cit., p. 249
government officers were killed by insurgents and threatened to kill more. So, all the opposition parties had submitted a memorandum to the President of India demanding the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly and the dismissal of the Janata Ministry.

5.3 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 1980

The opposition parties on the eve of the elections to the Legislative Assembly, 1980 were the Congress (I), Congress (U), CPI, CPI (M) and the Manipur People’s Party. The Congress I party in its election manifesto had highlighted the leadership of the Rajiv Gandhi in the Congress (I) organisation and the growth and development of the party which had completed 105 years of its existence and completing 44 years in the state of Manipur. It was Rajiv Gandhi who had concluded Mizo Accord (Assam Accord and Tripura Accord), thus solving the problems of North East India. The Congress I party, the manifesto says, “is the only political party which can establish a stable government in Manipur. No political party can provide a stable government in Manipur’. The coalition partners of the government had already decided to contest the coming Assembly elections, 1980 separately. The Congress had balanced BJP, Congress (S), MPP as parties which intends to disintegrate the nation, newly born political party in Manipur (Congress (S)) and the party which suffered split many times.

Another opposition party Congress (U) appealed to the voters to examine the previous political career of the political parties and its leaders before discussing their election manifestos. The Congress (U) is the only party not affected by the wave of defection in the state. So a

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8 MPCC, Election Manifesto, 1980, Imphal, p. II
9 Ibid, p. IV
stable government in Manipur can only be established by the party.\textsuperscript{10} The CPI which was one of the opposition parties to the Janata government, 1977-79 had pointed out the role of other political parties in defection from one to another, corruption, partiality and failure to take up long term planning and described the last government as adhoc.\textsuperscript{11} The party further promised to remove corruption at higher level and to establish a stable government, to oppose all forms of centralized administration, to amend the present system of election and to introduce Proportionate Representation, to recall the members of the Legislative Assembly and parliament. The Manipur People’s Party in its election manifesto promised maximum autonomy for Manipur by amending the Indian Constitution, the improvement of agriculture, development of Manipuri language, establishment of cordial relations between the hills and plains, removal from Manipur the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 and establishment of one Regiment for Manipur.\textsuperscript{12} The party also highlighted its achievement when in power for one year 1972-73 like the establishment of Regional Medical College Centre for Post graduate studies, Imphal under the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 1972, Manipur Public Service Commission, Law Commission, Spinning Mill, and Tsar Industry etc.

The party workers of the opposition parties mainly the Congress I, CPI and Manipur People’s Party worked tirelessly in order to defeat the candidates put up by the Janata Party. Each of the opposition political parties carried on election campaign independently of one another, appealed to the voters to cast their valuable votes to the candidates put up by the respective parties.

\textsuperscript{10} MPCC (U), Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1980, p. 2
\textsuperscript{11} CPI, Election Manifesto, Imphal, Irabot Bhavan, 1980, p. 5
\textsuperscript{12} MPP, Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1980, p. 7
The results of the Assembly Elections, 1980 clearly had shown the victory of the Opposition Parties. The Congress I had emerged as the single largest party securing 13 seats out of 58 seats contested. The Congress (U) had secured 6 seats out of 40 seats contested. The Manipur People’s Party secured 4 seats and the CPI 5 seats. The ruling Janata Party from 1977 to 1979 had secured 10 seats out of 57 contested. Two independents from Churachandpur joined Congress I. Th. Chaoba Singh and M. Ibotombi from the Janata also joined Congress I and thereby increased the strength of the Congress I to 17.\textsuperscript{13} A Congress I led coalition government was formed with the Congress (U), MPP and Kuki National Assembly under the Chief Ministership of R. K. Dorendra Singh.

There were three Congress I led coalition ministries from January, 1980 to December 1984. There was a large seal defection of MLAs from one party to another during this period. In February, 1981, the opposition party led by Ksh. Chaoba Singh introduced a motion of no confidence against the Rishang Keishing ministry. But the Assembly was prorogued on 27\textsuperscript{th} February, 1981. The MPP, the CPI, the Congress (U), the CPI (M) and the Janata party came together and formed the People’s Democratic Front led by Kh. Chaoba Singh. The Front requested the Governor to form the government. The total strength of the People’s Democratic Front was 10 MLAs from the ruling side 11 MPP, 5 CPI, 1 Congress (U), 1 CPI (M) and 2 Janata, altogether 30. The Governor did not allow the Front to form government as the total strength of the Front was just fifty percent of the total strength of the House.

\textbf{5.4 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 1984}

\textsuperscript{13} Kshetri Bimola, op cit., p. 250
The MPP which was a coalition partner when the Congress I led coalition was formed under Chief Ministership of R. K. Dorendra Singh became opposition party on the eve of Assembly elections, 1984. The manifesto of the Manipur People’s Party mentioned 22 items, important ones being the removal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 from Manipur, development and establishment of agricultural industry inclusion of Manipuri language in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India, a separate Governor and a separate High Court for Manipur etc.\(^\text{14}\) The election manifesto of CPI had criticized the policies and programmes of the Congress government. The party had laid down in its election manifesto the following, namely the abolition of corruption, removal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958; promotion of the rights, culture and language of the hill people, to provide old aged pension, to give allowance to the unemployed youths, to open retail price shops, to protect the rights of the workers etc.\(^\text{15}\) The party workers of MPP, CPI, Congress (U) and Janata party worked for the party candidates put up in the Assembly elections, 1984. The nature of campaign was more or less similar among the opposition parties. The campaign generally include holding of meetings, house to house campaign, posting posters with the photographs of candidates, rallies etc.

The results of the Assembly elections 1984 show the poor performance of the opposition parties. Only the leader of the opposition in the Assembly namely M. Koireng Singh could get himself elected. The other 3 newly elected Janata members were new ones. Likewise MPP could win only 3 seats out of 34 candidates contested in the Assembly elections, 1984. O. Joy Singh who was in Janata in 1980, now MPP got elected from Langthabal Assembly constituency. The Communist Party

\(^{14}\) MPP, Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1984
\(^{15}\) CPI, Election Manifesto, 1984
of India could get only one seat out of the 17 seats contested. In the Assembly of 1980, the CPI had five members. The number had been reduced only to 1 in 1984. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had contested Assembly elections for the first time in Manipur. But it could not open its account in the electoral politics of Manipur.

In short the opposition parties had failed to win the confidence and the support of the people. It only helped the ruling Congress to get more seats than 1980 Assembly elections. The Congress for the first time had secured 30 seats, half of the total strength of the Assembly in the history of the electoral politics of Manipur. The opposition parties namely the Manipur People’s Party, the Communist Party of India, the Janata party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress etc. remained as opposition in the Legislative Assembly 1984.

5.5 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 1990

The General Assembly Elections, 1990 were held in February, 1990. The opposition parties which put up candidates in the elections were the Communist Party of India, the Janata Dal, Congress (S), CPI (M) and MPP. Just before the election, a six party alliance was formed to contest against the Congress. The six parties were the MPP, the Janata, the Congress (S), the KNA and the National Political Conference.

The manifesto of the Manipur People’s Party classified the programmes to be taken up into 2 namely political and economic. The political programme mentioned are: to safeguard the territorial integrity of Manipur, inclusion of the Manipuri Language in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution of India, the removal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, reservation of 100% of the posts of the state government for

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16 MPP, Election Manifesto, 1990, Imphal
the indigenous people, more autonomy to the state, removal of Foreigners Territorial order, 1963, to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats from 2 to 3-2 in the valley and 1 in the hills, political settlement with insurgents etc. The economic programmes are the improvement of agricultural industry, industrialization of Manipur by having one industry in each district of Manipur, to provide one job to one family, 50 percent of the resources to be earmarked for rural and hill development, formation of State Price Control Board and supply of rice at Rs. 2.50 per kg, formation of the State Export Promotion Council to look after commercialization and export, strengthening of the State Planning Board with full time members.\textsuperscript{17} The Manipur People’s Party for the first time laid emphasis on economic programme. It might be because of the economic backwardness of Manipur and the financial problems faced by the government from time to time. The Youth Front of MPP worked hard, canvassing for the candidates put up by the party in different constituencies of Manipur. The women wing of the party did not lag behind the Youth Front in the election campaign organised by MPP. The contesting candidates along with a large number of party workers, followers including women and youths organised rallies within the geographical area of each constituency.

The other opposition parties like Communist Party of India, Janata, CPI (M), KNA etc. had focused local as well as national issues in their election manifestos. Some of the manifestos had criticized the policies and programmes taken by the ruling Congress government.

There was no electoral alliance on the part of the opposition parties to fight in the Assembly elections of 1990. Of course, the parties could reach some understanding in the adjustment of seats. When they failed to

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
arrive at an understanding in some constituencies, each party put up their own candidates and termed it as ‘friendly contest’\(^{18}\). The term ‘friendly contest’ lost its value and significance as each of the opposition parties carried on their election campaign, organised house to house campaign and rallies independently of one another. The workers of the candidates belonging to different parties of the Alliance worked separately in order to get their own candidates elected.

The opposition parties had political gain in the Assembly elections, 1990. The ruling party Congress could secure only 25 seats out of 60 seats contested. In the last Assembly elections, the party had secured 30 seats. Though secured 25 seats, the Congress was the single largest party. It was the opposition parties mainly the MPP and Janata which gained by securing 11 seats each by the two parties. In the last Assembly, the MPP had only 3 members and the Janata only 4. The CPI could also increase its members from 1 in 1984 to 3 in 1990 Assembly elections. Another party of the Opposition Alliance namely KNA had secured one more seat i.e. 2 than 1984 having one seat only. In 1984 the Congress (S) could not elect even one member belonging to the party. But in the Assembly elections, 1990, the Congress (S) had secured 6. Thus the opposition parties altogether had secured 34 seats; MPP-11, Janata-11, Congress (S)-6, CPI-3, KNA-2 and National Peoples Party-1. The opposition parties formed United Legislative in order to form government. Soon there was contest regarding the leadership issue. The bone of contention was between Janata party and MPP as both had secured the equal number of members i.e. 11 each. At last MPP had won the game. R. K. Ranbir was elected as the leader of the United Legislative party. The new government was formed with R. K. Ranbir Singh as the Chief Minister of Manipur. In

\(^{18}\) The Manipur Mail, “Opposition Unity”, Imphal, 24 January 1990
the Council of Ministers, there was representation from Janata, CPI and KNA. This ministry remained in office for 2 years.

The Congress, though emerged as the single largest party could not form the government. The effort of the opposition parties proved to be fruitful in forming the government.

The MPP led coalition ministry headed by R. K. Ranbirir could not complete its full term. The ministry fell on 1 January, 1992. The Congress was able to built its strength with the success of two MLAs namely K. Apabi Devi and I. Hemochandra in the by election held in Oinam and Singjamei constituencies after the death of K. Bira Singh and I. Tompok Singh in plane crash. The social and political atmosphere of Manipur was also greatly affected by the ethnic crisis between the Nagas and the Kukis in the hill areas of Manipur since 1992. There were 2 Congress led ministries during the period 1992 to February, 1995.

5.6 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 1995

The Assembly elections were held in February, 1995. The opposition parties contesting the elections were national political parties like Congress (S), Bharatiya Janata Party, Samata Party and Janata Dal. The opposition local parties were the Manipur People’s Party; National People’s Party etc. the newly formed Federal Party of Manipur also joined the electoral battle of Assembly elections.

The manifesto of the Congress (S) had promised to uphold the nation’s honour and democratic values. It also mentioned the right to work, clean and effective government, and equal participation of women in the socio-economic and political reconstruction of the nation. The manifesto further promised the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, shifting of Assam Rifles from Kangla, shifting of CRPF
camps from the sensitive and vulnerable areas.\textsuperscript{19} The Janata Dal in its manifesto promised to install bio-technology research scheme in Manipur University, to frame power policy for removing the difficulties of industrial backwardness of Manipur by 2000 AD, to provide equal facilities and one third job reservation for women in government services and public undertakings, to frame a new forest policy, to make the right to work a fundamental right etc.\textsuperscript{20} The manifesto of the Janata Party mentioned as many as 41 items. The main items were the solution of the insurgency and Naga Kuki crisis, promotion of art and culture, to set up mini industrial towns at all zonal centres of Greater Imphal and towns middle districts of Manipur, to provide financial power to the Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, District Councils, removal of Assam Rifles from Kangla, removal of Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 from Manipur etc.\textsuperscript{21}

The Samata party promised in its election manifesto that a Manipur Regiment will be established after removing Assam Rifles from Manipur, to set up a Minority Commission to protect minorities, compulsory reservation of seats for Manipur and other north eastern states by amending the recruitment rules of all central services, to export the handloom and handicrafts products of Manipur, improvement of irrigation system for triple cropping, protection of the territorial boundary of Manipur, solution of insurgency problem through dialogue across the table and to declare general amnesty for them, protection of the genuine rights of the indigenous people, solution of Communal clash in the hills through negotiations etc.\textsuperscript{22}

The Bharatiya Janata Party had classified its programmes into 8 heads in its election manifesto namely political, Law and Order, general

\textsuperscript{19} MPCC (S), Assembly Elections, 1995
\textsuperscript{20} Janata Dal, Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1995
\textsuperscript{21} Janata Dal, Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1995
\textsuperscript{22} Samata Party, Election Manifesto, 1995, Manipur
administration, trade and economic, industrial policy, judiciary, education, arts and culture, Youth and Sports, Solution of insurgency problem, Integration of Manipur, Handover of Kangla, Three MPs in the Lok Sabha- 2 in the valley and one in the hills, Removal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, to open a women’s police station, to provide one job to a family, to enquire against the accumulation of wealth/property etc. comes under the political, law and order and general administration. Under Trade and Commerce and Industry items like, to provide essential commodities at subsidized rate, to open trade between India and Myanmar, to increase the means of transportation, to equate grievances to industry, to provide facilities for double or triple cropping, to support indigenous industries like Kounaphak matting, weeding etc., to encourage tourism industry etc. The independence of law courts, implementation of the Official Language Act, promotion of dance and music, to provide employment to outstanding sportsmen, to encourage indigenous games of Manipur like Polo, Kang etc., to reward the children champions in the field of sports etc.\textsuperscript{23} are under Judiciary, Education, Arts and Culture, Youth and Sports. The manifesto promised to bring a stable ministry, corruption free government, protection of the unity and integrity of Manipur, solution of insurgency problem, adequate supply of water and electricity etc. The manifesto of the Communist Party of India is a short one and appealed to the people to vote for the party. Some important programmes to be taken up by the party are: establishment of a stable government, abolition of corruption, to protect the rights and integrity of individuals, solution of insurgency problem, respect for all caste, creed and religion, development of arts and culture and sports, regular supply of electricity, and water encouragement of farmers,\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} Bharatiya Janata Party, Election Manifesto, Manipur Assembly Elections, February, 1995
government employees and backward sections of the population, promotion of higher academic standard in Manipur.\textsuperscript{24} The manifesto of the Communist party of India (Marxist) pledged to save human rights, promote communal harmony, national unity, to provide more autonomy to the states, inclusion of Manipuri language in the 8\textsuperscript{th} Schedule of Indian Constitution, to set up Agro industries, extension of railway line upto Imphal, to solve insurgency problem, shifting of Assam Rifles from Kangla etc.\textsuperscript{25}

The main opposition party and strong regional party, the Manipur people’s Party in its election manifesto had promised to the voters the review of the Merger Agreement, 1949 and the transfer of the Kabaw Valley, declaration of Manipur valley as Scheduled area, re-structuring of the North Eastern Council based on the principle of equity reservation of territorial integrity, political solution of insurgency problem, removal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, TADA etc. The party also mentioned that there should be three Parliamentary constituencies for election to the Lok Sabha etc. under political programme. Under economic programme, the MPP mentioned about control over price distortions and undue rise, door delivery of economic package of essential commodities and industrial inputs, declaration of a new industrial and agricultural policy, opening of a trade centre at Bungbung near Burma border, the Loktak Hydro Project to be brought within state sector. The manifesto further promised the constitution of a Staff Selection Commission, introduction of more state Civil Services, declaration of a new cultural policy and state policy of youth and sports,

\textsuperscript{24} CPI, Election Manifesto, Imphal, 1995
\textsuperscript{25} CPI (M), Election manifesto, Imphal, Feb. 1995
unemployment allowance etc.\textsuperscript{26} These were classified as Service and social sector.

The newly formed Federal Party of Manipur, a state party had put forward its election manifesto by saying that the party shall strive to achieve the following programmes like the preservation of the territorial integrity of Manipur, autonomy for districts and villages, to negotiate with the insurgents, protection of human rights, to bring social and cultural identity, shifting of Assam Rifles from Kangla, equitable economic development of all regions of Manipur, development of all khas land for agricultural purpose, improvement of transport and communication including national highways, proper utilization of forest, water and energy, preservation of environment and ecological balance development of tourism at suitable places, development of education and culture, development of trade and industry including the establishment of agro-forest industries, to provide facilities for sports and to take up welfare programmes for the youths etc. The party also promised to bring a clean government in Manipur.\textsuperscript{27} Another newly formed party on the eve of Assembly Elections, 1995 the National People’s Party had demanded 3 MPs in the Lok Sabha for Manipur, reduction of tax on water and electricity, to reduce the price of the essential commodities, corruption free governance, to provide one job to one family, development of agriculture and industry etc.\textsuperscript{28} another hill based party of Manipur, the Kuki National Assembly, in its manifesto had promised to safeguard the integrity of the state, creation of SADAR hills as a separate entity, to safeguard the legitimate interests and aspirations of non-ethnic citizens of Manipur, to safeguard the legitimate interest and aspirations of the tribals

\textsuperscript{26} Manipur People’s Party, Election Manifesto, 1995, Imphal
\textsuperscript{27} Federal Party of Manipur, Election Manifesto, 1995, Imphal
\textsuperscript{28} National Peoples Party, Election Manifesto, 1995, Imphal
pertaining to land settlement and administrative system in all tribal areas. Under socio-economic programme, the party mentioned one income earner for every home, jobs for jobless youths, exploitation of forests and mineral resources and preservation of wild life, abundant supplies of gas, coal etc. , to relieve pressure on use of firewood, alternative means of livelihood to replace Jhuming and revitalization of co-operative farming. Under miscellaneous items, the Kuki National Assembly put forward free and compulsory education for children upto the age of 14, to declare war against drug abuse and other social vices which are injurious to health, to promote tourism and sensitize the strategic importance of the state requiring faster development of border roads and state highways etc.29

The opposition parties thus had promised to bring a stable government in Manipur, the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 from Manipur and many welfare programmes to the people of Manipur.

The opposition parties altogether had promised to provide an alternative government rather than the Congress government which is a corrupt one. In all election manifestos of the opposition parties, the main political agenda was the threat to the territorial boundary of Manipur, protection of unity and integrity of the state, the removal and shifting of Assam Rifles from Kangla, the sacred palace of Manipur, solution of the insurgency problem of Manipur etc.

The electoral scene of the Assembly elections, 1995 was quite different from the earlier Assembly elections. The opposition candidates and political parties had emphasized more on local issues rather than national ones. The ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis of Manipur started from 1992 had cause a grave concern to all political

29 Kuki National Assembly, Election Manifesto, 1995
parties contesting the elections. It was mainly the opposition parties, the Manipur People’s Party, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and other opposition parties which had criticized the ruling Congress government for its failure to solve the problem. The question of the protection of the unity and integrity of Manipur was raised by many civil organisations of Manipur. The opposition parties had joined in the emergency political trend and promised to the electorate to protect the unity and integrity of Manipur. The territorial boundary between Manipur and Nagaland became a political issue in the Assembly Elections, 1995.

The MPP had raised the issue of South Nagaland or Greater Nagaland demanded by some Naga organisations. The four hill districts of Manipur namely: Chandel, Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong are the areas for South Nagaland or parts of Greater Nagaland. The major community, the Meities strongly objected such a move on the part of the Naga organisations. The Meiteis who inhabit the valley of Manipur have always risen for political integration of both the valley and the hills of Manipur. The Manipur People’s Party had condemned the resolution on Naga integration taken by the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland to the effect that the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur should become a part of Nagaland. The MPP had also opposed Rishang Keishing, a Tangkhul Naga to be the Chief Minister of Manipur. The party felt that Rishang Keishing was a supporter of Greater Nagaland. It may be remembered that Rishang Keishing was the President of the United Naga Integration Council (UNIC) which merged with the Congress in August, 1972. The Merger Agreement between the All India Congress Party and the United Naga Integration Council Clearly indicates that integration of Naga inhabited areas still remained valid. “It is agreed upon that the Congress party does not oppose Naga integration movement and does not consider
Naga integration movement as anti-party, anti-national, and anti-state and unconditional activity”. The MPP and other opposition parties organised a public meeting on 20 December 1994 with the slogan “Save Territorial Integrity Day” in protest against the agreement between the UNIC and the Congress party.

Another issue raised by the opposition parties as a strategy was the transporter’s strike. The transporters in Manipur had boycotted two national highways: No. 39 (Imphal-Dimapur Road) and No. 53 (Imphal-Jiribam Road) for 42 days from 31 December, 1994 to 9 February, 1995. The strike was organised in protest against the illegal imposition and collection of heavy “vehicles and goods taxes” on the vehicles plying along the two national highways by the outlawed NSCN (IM) faction”.

The opposition parties had criticized the Congress government led by Rishang Keishing for not bringing amicable solution to the problem. The President of the MPP, Y. Yaima Singh said, “MPP fully supported the JAC strike. The artificial scarcity of essential commodities in the state is created by Congress I government….. Following the strike, people suffered badly. The government should own any responsibility coming out of this strike”. The Bharatiya Janata Party, another opposition party had condemned both the state and central government for neglecting the JAC transporters strike and said that the Centre was reluctant to solve the problem”. The General Secretary, CPI, Indrajit Gupta targeted the Congress I government for keeping silent too long on the truckers’ strike.

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30 Merger Agreement between the United Naga Integration Council and the Congress, 4 August 1972, Imphal
31 Eastern panorama, Shillong, March, 1995, pp. 16-17
32 Ibid., February, 1, 6 and 9, 1995
33 Ibid., February 9 and 11, 1995
The Assembly election, 1995 was actually a fight between the Congress I, ruling party and the MPP, the main opposition party. There was no electoral alliance among the opposition parties. Of course there was electoral understanding between the CPI and the CPI (M) and the Janata Dal.

The results of the Assembly elections, 1995 shows a marked improvement in the electoral performance of the opposition parties. The main opposition party, MPP had secured 18 seats out of 54 contested. The party could increase 7 seats from the party strength in the Legislative Assembly, 1990. The Federal Party of Manipur and the National People’s Party could secure 2 seats each. The BJP could open its account for the first time in the electoral battle of the Manipur by securing one seat out of the 20 seats contested. The Samata party had secured 2 seats out of the 24 seats, the party had contested. But other opposition parties like the Janata Dal, CPI and CPI (M) could not increase its electoral strength. The Janata Dal had secured only 7 seats out of 41 contested, 4 seats less than its strength in 1990. Likewise, the Communist party of India had secured only 2, though the party had 3 members in the Legislative Assembly, 1990. The CPI (M) could not open its account in the Assembly electoral scene of 1995.

The opposition parties led by MPP tried to form government as no party secured majority in the Assembly elections 1995. The ruling Congress Party had secured 21 seats in the valley and 5 in the hills. Later in the by election, it could secure one more seat. The opposition parties formed a United Democratic Front consisting of the MPP, the Janata Dal, the Congress (S), the Samata party, the Communist Party of India with 32 MLAs and claimed to form the government.34 The ruling Congress also

34 Kshetri Bimola, op cit., p. 257
tried to form government and had requested the Governor to allow it. The Governor O. N. Srivastava invited Rishang Keishing, the leader of the Congress led coalition to form the government. The reason for inviting Rishang Keishing to form the government might be that the Congress party was single largest party in the Assembly elections, 1995, though the United Democratic Front had claimed to have 32 MLAs on its side.

The main opposition party, the MPP had boycotted the swearing in ceremony of Rishang Keishing as Chief Minister and other Congress leaders, Radhabinod Koijam and Th. Debendra Singh as Cabinet ministers on 25th February, 1995. The opposition parties though worked hard in the Assembly elections, 1995 was not able to form the government.

The role of the Governor in inviting Rishang Keishing to form the new government was criticized by leaders of the opposition parties which had already form United Democratic Front or United Legislative Front. Of course the Governor said that he had received a claim of support of 35 MLAs from the MPP President Y. Yaima, but when the latter was asked to substantiate the claim, the newly formed ULF could produce only 27 MLAs (MPP-18, JD-7 and CPI-2). The leader of the opposition R.K. Ranbir Singh had charged the Governor as Congress I agent. The leader of the other opposition parties namely BJP, Janata Dal, CPI (M) etc. equally condemned the action of the Governor.

After the formation of Congress I led coalition ministry on 25th February, 1995 headed by Rishang Keishing, there developed a conflict among the Congress MLAs. Before the completion of one year, as many as 9 MLAs including ministers had withdrawn support to Congress I.

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35 Government of Manipur, Gazette, 466, 467, 6 March 1995
36 NK Chowdhury, Assembly Elections, 1994-95, p-213, An Analysis and Results, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 1995
Governor asked Rishang Keishing to seek vote of Confidence. In the trial of strength on 31 July 1995 only 27 MLAs supported Rishang Keishing and opposition got 26 votes. One MLA and 5 disqualified MLAs had abstained from voting.\(^{37}\) Later as many as 15 Ministers (11 cabinet and 4 state Ministers) had submitted their resignation from the Ministry. And 23 MLAs had submitted to the Speaker that they had resigned from being the members of Congress Legislature Party.\(^{38}\) Soon there was turn of political events. W. Nipamacha Singh who was the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly had resigned from Speakership. He formed one new regional political party called Manipur State Congress Party on 15 December, 1997. When vote of Confidence was taken the MLAs belonging to MSCP with W. Nipamacha as its leader got 38 votes and Rishang Keishing got only 16 votes. W. Nipamacha Singh was sworn as Chief Minister on 16 December, 1997.

### 5.7 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 2000

The next Assembly elections were held in February, 2000. For the first time there were pre-poll alliances among the political parties of Manipur. The opposition parties including the Congress I, the MPP, the CPI, the Janata Dal (Secular) had formed an alliance under the name of Secular Democratic Front. The Congress and the MPP, the two rival political parties came together to fight against the ruling MSCP. And other opposition parties namely the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), the Samata party and the Kuki National Assembly had formed another alliance called Manipur Democratic Alliance. On the other had the ruling MSCP formed an electoral alliance with Federal Party of Manipur called

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\(^{37}\) Poknapham, 1 August 1995  
\(^{38}\) Kshetri Bimola, op cit., p. 259
the United Front of Manipur. The remaining opposition parties had fought the elections on their individual capacity.

The manifesto of the Secular democratic Front had promised integrity and oneness of Manipur, greater autonomy, increase of seats in parliament from Manipur, solution of insurgency problem, reservation of seats for women in parliament and Legislative Assembly, social scheme for youths, pension scheme for daily wage earners, widows etc., crop insurance scheme for the farmers to earmark 10 percent of Union budget and 30 percent of the state budget in education, to frame environment policy, to frame Manipuri Language policy, to remove Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, to set up a full-fledged High Court for Manipur, development of handloom and small scale industries etc.\(^{39}\)

The Manipur Democratic Alliance in its election manifesto had promised to endeavor for permanent peace, progress and prosperity through development projects by solving the insurgency problem of Manipur. The Manipur Democratic Alliance also criticized the ruling Congress party as inheritor of colonial legacy. The manifesto pledged to uphold and protect territorial integrity of Manipur, to remove Assam Rifles from Kangla, to devote powers to the Gram Panchayats and Zilla Parishad to remove corruption, to establish a National Highway Protection Force, to increase the number of MPs-2 in the Lok Sabha for valley and 1 in the hills, 2 MPs in the Rajya Sabha-one general and another reserved. The manifesto further mentioned the establishment of separate police stations for women in all districts, to establish more Indo-Myanmar trade centres in Manipur, to create a separate Manipur Regiment in the Army for the Youths, to introduce a Special employment scheme for educated unemployed youths, to introduce compulsory mass

\(^{39}\) Secular Democratic Front, Election Manifesto, 1995, Imphal
insurance scheme, to review and amend the present land laws, to provide free medical aid to all citizens of Manipur, to introduce a sports policy of Manipur and State Youth Policy, to establish forest based and viable agro based industries etc.  

Other opposition political parties like the Nationalist Congress Party, Janata Dal (United), Rashtriya Janata Dal etc. had put up various items and programmes in their election manifestos on the eve of Assembly elections, 2000. The manifesto of the Nationalist Congress Party had put forward the provision of flood control works, coordinated investment in irrigation, to improve the productivity of horticulture, to introduce agro-forestry products suitable to different areas of Manipur, to take up major long term projects in animal husbandry, piggery and poultry, fisheries, to improve infrastructure in roads, to frame new industrial policy, tourism development, human development, implementation of the Manipur Hill Autonomous District Council Rules. Another opposition party Janata Dal (U) promised the protection of territorial integrity of Manipur, to improve the condition of education at primary level, establishment of well equipped hospitals in the far flung villages/hill areas, to make aware of Human rights and duties, to root out corruption, to decentralize more powers to village panchayats and municipal councils, to provide clothing and construct dwelling houses free of cost to the homeless persons of BPL living in the far off villages and hill area, improvement of road communication, electricity and water, development of sports, arts and culture. The Rashtriya Janata Dal in its manifesto promised the execution of the 8 Assembly segments of Thoubal district from the Reserved Seat of Outer Parliamentary

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40 Manipur Democratic Alliance, Election Manifesto, Manipur, 2000
41 Nationalist Congress Party, Election Manifesto, 2000
42 Janata Dal (United), Election Manifesto, 2000
Constituency of Manipur, to transfer full power to autonomous hill district council and panchayati raj institutions, to raise Manipur regiment, to create conducive atmosphere for the integrity of Manipur, to set up a state women commission, to promote and protect the Flora and fauna of Manipur.\textsuperscript{43}

The Assembly election scene 2000 was characterised by critical social issues. There was fear psychosis among the contesting candidates and workers. There were grenade attacks at the residences of some of the candidates, ambush on candidates, ministers, snatching of guns from their escorts. The Revolutionary Peoples Front (RPF) had called boycott of the leaders of the national political parties like the Congress and the BJP who came to campaign for the candidates put up by their parties. The Front appealed to the people to remain indoors during their visits.\textsuperscript{44} The All Manipur Students Union (AMSU) had also called general strike demanding the release of their leaders when the election campaign was going in full swing, flags, festoons, posters etc. was seen everywhere for the party candidates. Some Kuki organisations had boycotted the Chief Minister, W.Nipamacha Singh and his party, MSCP for not granting the Sardar Hills District the status of a full-fledged district. But there was no election boycott call from the side of the Kuki organisations. In the Naga areas, the NSCN (IM), an underground organisation had called for Assembly election boycott. The electioneering was in a low web in the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. The posters, flags, symbols, festoons and banners were seen in these areas.

The house to house campaign had continued as well by the party candidates along with their workers. A new emerging trend was that the local youth clubs had organised meetings, calling the contesting

\textsuperscript{43} Rashtriya Janata Dal, Election Manifesto, 2000
\textsuperscript{44} The Sangai Express, Manipuri local daily vernacular, Imphal, 25-26 January 2000
candidates of different political parties to speak on various issues, both the local, regional and national. Some clubs banned unfair practices on the candidates and their workers like feasting, distribution of money, providing drugs and other intoxicants etc. to the youths.

The opposition parties and their leaders called the MSCP and FPM coalition government as corrupt. The ministers had submitted the people’s money to construct palatial buildings and acquired immovable properties. The opposition also accused the ruling party for misusing government machineries in the election campaign, misusing Manipur Police Commandos as muscle power and using money power as well. The Manipur Democratic Alliance promised a new and performing government in Manipur. Another opposition party, BJP said that since the party is in power at the Centre, there will be free flow of funds for the development of the state if the party comes to power. P. B. Acharya, the BJP leader said, as a result of long Congress rule, there are underdevelopment and rampant corruption in the state. Insurgency had increased; potable water could not be supplied to the people, lootings and are going on. P. A. Sangma, the NCP leader who campaigned for his party candidates said that “the people of Manipur had become fed up with the Congress, MPP and MSCP. All these parties had shown a very poor record of governing the state. The only alternative left to the people is the young but corrupt free and development friendly NCP”.

The NSCN (IM) an underground organisation had boycotted the Assembly elections 2000 in the Naga inhabited areas. It is said that the boycott was to influence and help the ongoing Naga Peace talks with the Centre. As many as 14 political parties both national and regional had contested the elections.

45 APK Singh, Election Politics in Manipur, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.343.
The result of the Assembly elections, 2000 show a poor performance of the opposition parties. The two alliances in the elections namely the Secular Democratic Front consisting of Congress, MPP and Janata Dal(S) had suffered defeat by securing only 16 seats (Congress 11, MPP 4 and Janata Dal(S)-1). The Congress had 22 seats and the MPP-18 seats in the last Legislative Assembly. But in the Assembly elections 2000, the Congress lost half of the seats and the MPP as many as 14 seats. It was a crushing defeat for MPP which was once strong regional party of Manipur.

Another opposition alliance, the Manipur Democratic Alliance consisting of BJP, Samata party and Janata Dal (U) could increased its strength in the Legislative Assembly. The BJP had only seat in the Legislative Assembly 1995. The party could increase 5 more seats by securing 6 seats in the Legislative Assembly, 2000.

The Samata Party lost one seat in the elections. The Janata Dal (S) and the Janata Dal (U) also lost 4 seats altogether, might be because of the split of the party. In the Legislative Assembly, 1995, the party had 7 seats. The Nationalist Congress Party and RJD won one seat each.

The result of the Assembly elections 2000 clearly shows that the ruling parties or Alliance always had an upper hand for becoming successful in the electoral politics of Manipur. Thus the opposition parties and their manifestoes failed to give an impact on the political behavior of the people of Manipur.

It is interesting to study the role of the opposition parties in the formation of government. Most of the MLAs who were elected on the tickets of the opposition parties had started to join the ruling camp within short time of the declaration of election results. Some newly elected MLAs had splitted the party and joined MSCP. Three MPP elects out of 4
except O. Joy Singh had splitted the party and joined MSCP. All the 4 NCP elects also had joined MSCP en masse. The lone RJD MLA and another from JD (U) also defected to MSCP from their original parties. There were charges and counter charge between the defectors and their party organisation. The leaders of the party organisations had charged that there cannot be split of the party before the constitution of a new Assembly and swearing in of the elected MLAs. They also requested the Governor not to include them in the Council of ministers. However the defected MLAs had clarified that they left their original parties and joined MSCP out of their free will. The party organisations had expelled them later from the primary membership for their anti-party activities.

After one year of the formation of United Front ministry i.e. from March, 2000 to February, 2001, there developed a crisis due to the conflict between Chief Minister W. Nipamacha Singh and the Speaker, S. Dhananjoy Singh. The crisis became more serious when the Chief Minister, W. Nipamacha Singh, who was also the President of MSCP and Th. Chaoba Singh, the sitting Lok Sabha MP and the working President of the party expelled each other from the party. There seem to have understanding between the Speaker, S. Dhananjoy Singh and the opposition group. It was on 15 November, 2000 that the Speaker, S. Dhananjoy Singh was picked up by the opposition group. The next day i.e. 16 November, 2000, the opposition group and a faction from the ruling side comprising of 21 MLAs set up a camp at Speaker’s bungalow.

The opposition group had 11 Congress, 6 BJP, 1 Samata Party, 1 Janata Dal (S), 1 NCP and 1 MPP. There was no confidence motion against the Speaker. But the Speaker had rejected the no-confidence motion against him as unfounded. The political crisis became more serious as more ruling MLAs numbering 8 had left the government and
joined the Opposition. In the meantime, Radhabinod Koijam who was elected on Congress ticket left the Congress along with 9 MLAs. The MLAs of the opposition had united and formed Manipur Democratic Front. There was political tension between the ruling group led by Chief Minister, W. Nipamacha Singh and the opposition led by Radhabinod Koijam. As a surprise move, W. Nipamacha and his loyalists had joined Radhabinod’s Samata Party group on 13 February, 2001. Later Nipamacha had resigned from the Chief Ministership in favour of Radhabinod Koijam. The two groups together formed the United Democratic Alliance (UDA). Later on six different political parties in the opposition namely the Samata party, BJP, MSCP, JD(S), NCP and MPP had formed ‘People’s Front’ and elected Radhabinod Koijam as its leader. Radhabinod Koijam had the support of 45 MLAs belonging to the six political parties. He became the Chief Minister of Manipur. Later 4 MLAs again joined People’s Front. The Front led by Radhabinod Koijam had 49 MLAs.46

In the opposition, there were only 10 MLAs including W. Nipamacha Singh former Chief Minister, L. Chandramani Singh, former Deputy Chief Minister Rishang Keising, Congress I leader and W. Leima Devi, lone independent member. Thus there was no impact of the electoral alliances among the political parties after the elections. The MLAs elected on different political parties’ ticket had joined the party which secured the largest number of seats. The manifestos released on the eve of Assembly Elections, 2000 did not play important role in the electoral policies of Manipur. The only credit for the Opposition was that it could influence the Speaker of the Assembly as well as the MLAs belonging to the ruling parties to come out and joined the opposition

46 Ibid., p 363
group. The opposition was able to form the government under the leadership of Radhabinod Koijam.

Soon there developed conflict among the coalition partners mainly between Samata party led by Radhabinod Koijam and BJP led by R. K. Dorendra Singh.

It may be noted that the Samata party and BJP were the coalition partners in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre. Due to the conflict the MLAs belonging to the ruling and opposition had changed their side frequently, resulting in the downfall of the Radhabinod led coalition government just after 3 months of its rule.

5.8 Electoral Politics and Opposition party 2002

The next midterm Assembly elections were held in February, 2002. The most important issue on the eve of the elections was the extension of the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM) to the state of Manipur. A new term ‘without territorial limit’ was included in the Ceasefire Agreement concluded in June, 2001. The people of Manipur had expressed their fear and apprehensive that the inclusion of the new term indirectly meant that the ceasefire will be extended to Manipur and the territorial integrity of Manipur will be affected by the inclusion of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur into the proposed ‘Nagalim’ of NSCN(IM). As many as 18 persons died in the People’s uprising against the inclusion of the term on 18 June, 2001. The people of Manipur felt hatred of politicians for their defections, dissident politics, for their negative political behavior etc. leading to the dissolution of the last Assembly before the completion of its full term. The MLAs and MPs were the targets of the agitation of the people. Many of their houses and belongings were torched and many offices of the political
parties were burnt down. The extension of the Ceasefire Agreement and the inclusion of the new term ‘without territorial limit’ were due to the non-existence of popular ministry. The MLAs were responsible for the imposition of the President’s Rule in the state.

The next important issue was that of the Nagas. There was joint meeting of the Naga candidates and the United Naga Council at Senapati. The candidate and the UNC had signed a declaration known as ‘Senapani Declaration’ having four points. The candidates except some had signed the declaration. The four points in the Declaration were: 1) the election campaign shall be used to strengthen the ongoing peace process including the application of the ceasefire to the whole of Nagaland (Nagalim), 2) The candidates being elected steadfastly promote and defend in the Manipur Legislature the inherent rights of the Nagas, 3) The elected candidates shall be prepared to resign from the legislative assembly to promote the peace process and shall do so if called upon by the Naga People under the aegis of the United Naga Council (UNC). Those who fail to fulfill this declaration will be answerable to the Naga people.47

There were rallies and protests by the people of Manipur mainly the Meira Paibees against the Senapati Declaration. The political parties belonging to the newly formed Democratic People’s Party and the Communist Party of India had pledged to the people by taking oath to serve the people faithfully and honestly and not to indulge in defection.

On the eve of Assembly elections, 2002 the local clubs and women organisations had organised joint meeting of the candidates or ‘combined candidates meeting’ making the candidates to speak on different issues facing the State of Manipur. The issue of corruption was also highlighted by the people to the contesting candidates. Some political parties had also

47 Declaration by Naga candidates to the Eight Manipur Legislative Assembly Election, 2002
raised the issue of the use of money power in their campaign and to reduce the expenses in the elections to eradicate corruption in the state.

There was no pre-poll alliance among the political parties, though the idea of making pre-poll alliance was in the mind of some leaders. The BJP and the Samata Party could not go together though there was a coalition government at the Centre under the name ‘NDA’. The two parties were against each other as the Samata led coalition government led by Radhabinod Kojiam was toppled down by BJP. Both the parties had announced that they would not have any pre-poll alliance. The Congress wanted to go alone without making any alliance with other political parties. The CPI (M) had announced that the party will support the CPI, MNC and DPP candidates. The MPP had also stated that the party will support some candidates in the constituencies where there were no MPP candidates. There was no unity among the opposition parties during MSCP led coalition government nor during the People’s Front government led by Radhabinod Kojiam. It is quite difficult to categorise the political parties as opposition during the period 2000 to 20001 due to frequent defections and split of the parties by elected MLAs. Of course, as a political party, the Congress had remained as the main opposition party during the period 2000 and 2001 though its MLAs had left the party.

The Indian National Congress had promised to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur, to restore peace, law and order, to end corruption etc. in its election manifesto. The party had presented action plan relating to economic development, communications, power projects, tourism, rural development, health etc. Proper attention will be paid to the selection of beneficiaries for social security schemes like old age pension scheme, national family benefit scheme and national maternity benefit
scheme, children, youth and students, sports, administrative and judicial reforms etc. are also highlighted in the election manifesto of the Congress party.\(^\text{48}\)

The BJP, an opposition party in its election manifesto had promised to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur, to bring development, to improve the law and order condition of Manipur, to devolve all powers and authorities listed in the 11\(^{\text{th}}\) Schedule of the Constitution, to review the land policy and industrial policy to develop human resources maximum utilization of Hydro power, to take up appropriate steps for irrigation and flood control, development plans for drainage and sewages, youth and employment, for women, health etc.\(^\text{49}\)

The protection of territorial integrity, economic development, to solve unemployment, to bring quality education, empowerment of local bodies, women empowerment, sports policy, culture, environment protection, movement against corruption, political solution to insurgency problem, protection of human rights etc. were some of the main points mentioned in the manifesto of the Communist party of India. The Nationalist Congress party had taken up the political issue of adopting a balanced and systematic development, disciplined and sound financial health, peaceful and mutual co-existence and stable government, the integrity issue, armed militancy and mechanisation of agriculture suited to the needs of the state. The manifesto of NCP further promised to take up programmes and implement the centrally sponsored schemes such as GSY, SGSY, PMGY, TRYSEM, INNOVATIVE HOUSING etc. The Janata Dal (Secular) promised to strengthen the People’s Front (without BJP and Congress), to solve the unemployment problem, to implement development works in order to solve the insurgency problem, to take up

\(^{48}\) MPCC-Election Manifesto, Assembly elections, 2002  
\(^{49}\) BJP, Election Manifesto, Assembly Elections, 2002
health care measures, women empowerment, environment protection, territorial integrity, protection of National Highways, to provide quality education etc.

The opposition party and main regional political party, Manipur People’s Party had put as many as 31 items in its election manifesto. These were the protection of the territorial integrity of Manipur, abolition of corruption, declaration of the assets of MLAs, proper implementation of the Essential Commodities Act, to increase Manipur’s MP seats in Parliament, to remove all black laws from Manipur, greater autonomy for Manipur, to introduce ‘Crop Insurance Scheme’ for the farmers, to persuade the Centre to provide one time ‘Comprehensive Special Economic Package’, to make efforts for more resource generations, to own Loktak Hydro Electric Project, to develop cottage and small scale industries, to increase food productions, to adopt a separate sericulture policy to increase the daily wages of the labourers, to provide loan to the educated unemployed, to encourage sports, to set up cultural centres in every district to make elementary school compulsory, 30 percent reservation for women in Parliament, state legislature and in government departments, general amnesty to the insurgents, to reform Public Distribution System, modification of Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960; to set up Staff Selection Board, to amend ‘Anti-Defection Law’, to have a full-fledged High Court, to improve both the NH-39 and NH-53, to set up ‘Manipur Regiment’, development of Imphal city, to supply pure drinking water and eradication of HIV/ AIDS from Manipur.\(^\text{50}\)

The Federal Party of Manipur which was a coalition partner of the MSCP led United Front Ministry in March, 2000 became an opposition

\(^{50}\text{MPP, Election Manifesto, Assembly Elections, 2002}\)
party. The party was with BJP, MPP and NCP MLAs in the attempt to topple the People’s Front Coalition Ministry led by Radhabinod Koijam in April, 2001. As an opposition party, the Federal Party of Manipur in its election manifesto promised to restructure the Centre-State relations in India, equal representation to parliament, to restructure the division of powers, repeal of Act 356 of the Constitution of India, unity and integrity of Manipur, autonomy for Manipur solution of insurgency problem, protection of human rights, preservation and promotion of social and cultural identity of Manipur, social harmony on the basis of social federalism, development with social justice, to improve transport and communication system, development of power generation project etc.\footnote{Federal Party of Manipur, Election Manifesto, 2002}

The election campaign was mainly concentrated on the Ceasefire issue, between the government of India and NSCN (IM), mainly in the valley area of Manipur. The candidates belonging to different political parties including the opposition in the valley of Manipur had promised to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur.\footnote{Muhindro Singh, L., “Emerging electoral trends and violation of human rights: A paradigm of exacerbating India’s democracy”, Muhindro and George, (ed.), Emerging electoral trends and violation of human rights: A paradigm of exacerbating India’s democracy, Mittal Pub., New Delhi, 2013, pp. 12-15} The contesting candidates campaigned not on their politics and programmes of action, but more on their commitment to the Manipur’s integrity. This was in response to the fear of the valley people that the integrity of Manipur will be affected due to the demand of NSCN (IM)’s demand for the integration of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. And in the hills of Manipur, particularly in the Naga inhabited areas, the ongoing peace talks between the government of India and the NSCN (IM) was the major issue. The United Naga Council (UNC) had already made 51 Naga candidates to sign the Senapati Declaration saying that if elected they would work for Naga
cause and support the ceasefire extension to Manipur. In addition, rampant corruption, ongoing financial crisis, insurgency problems, law and order problems etc. were also focused by the opposition parties.

The underground organisation, the Revolutionary Peoples’ Front (RPF) had appealed to the voters of Manipur to boycott the Central leaders belonging to BJP and Congress who came to Manipur for campaign for their parties and candidates.

When compared with the last Assembly elections, canvassing and campaigning by the candidates were at the low web. It might be due to the restrictions imposed by the local clubs, women’s organisations, Meira Paibis etc. under newly framed code of conduct. There was little display of flags, wall posters and festoons. Of course house to house campaign had continued by the candidates along with their workers and supporters of opposition as well as ruling party.

The results of the Assembly elections 2002 show the success of the main opposition party i.e. the Congress. The Congress put up 58 candidates in 58 constituencies and secured 20 seats. The party had emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly. The success of the Congress might be due to the ministerial instability during the period, 1999 to 2001. The party was also the only one having organisational stronghold in both the valley and the hills of Manipur. The next opposition party, the federal party of Manipur had secured 13 seats. The main regional political party and opposition, MPP was not able to build up its strength in the Legislative Assembly, 2002 as it secured only 2 out of the 14 candidates contested. The party could not attract the voters in its favour both in the valley and hills of Manipur. The CPI could secure 5 seats out of 16 candidates put up by the party. Other opposition parties

53 Interviewed with Radhabinod Koijam, former Cheif Minister and Opposition leader, 21 April 2011
namely the Nationalist Congress Party, the Samata and Democratic People’s party had secured 3, 3 and 2 seats respectively. The regional/state parties could win 25 seats in a House of 60 and national political parties like CPI, BJP, NCP, Samata and Congress altogether had secured 35 seats out of 60.

Emerging as a single largest party, the Congress, opposition party in 2000 and 2001 was quite successful in its attempt to form the government. The party along with CPI, NCP and MSCP (ruling party in 2000 and 2001) formed Secular Progressive Front. The Front had 35 members: Congress-20, MSCP-7, CPI-5 and NCP-3. Later on, lone MNC MLA also supported the Front, thereby increasing its strength to 36. The other opposition parties namely BJP, Samata, NCP, MPP and DPP having strength of 22 MLAs also formed Democratic People’s Alliance. But the governor had invited O. Ibobi Singh, leader of the Secular Democratic Front to form the government.

5.9 Concluding Observation

During the period under the study i.e. from 1972 to 2002, it is found that the Congress was in the opposition 4 times, the first in 1972, the second in 1974, the third in 1990 and the fourth in 2000. Though the Congress was single largest party in 1972 and in 1990, the party had to remain in the opposition as MPP and MSCP was able to get the support of likeminded parties to form a coalition government. On the other hand, the MPP was in the opposition on the basis of electoral performance three times, the first in 1984 having only 3 MLAs, the second in 1995 having 18 MLAs and in 2002 with 2 MLAs only. Though based on regionalism and greater autonomy for Manipur, the MPP could not attract the voters

54 APK Singh, op cit., p. 422
with their political ideologies and principles. The Communist party of India was in the opposition five times, first in 1972, the Second in 1974, the third in 1980, the fourth in 1984 and the fifth in 1995. The party was in opposition more than any other political party of Manipur both national and regional. In all these five terms, the party could secure only 5, 6, 5, 1 and 2 seats only. The BJP had endured into electoral politics quite late when compared with other political parties. It was opposition party three times, the first in 1995, the second in 2000 and the third in 2002. The party could win only 1, 6 and 4 seats only in the above three Assembly elections. The Samata Party was also another national political party which had participated in the Assembly elections of 2000 and 2002. As a new one, the party could secure only 1 and 3 seats respectively. The FPM was in the opposition in 2002 Assembly. It had secured 13 seats in the Assembly elections, 2002. Perhaps, the voters were influenced by new political slogan of federalism mainly in the context of the pluralistic society of Manipur. The newly entered national political party JD (S) had added new feather in the opposition in the Legislative Assembly of 2000 by having only one seat.