CHAPTER-VII

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The study of the emergence and growth of the regional political parties in India reveals that political parties emerge at a time when there is an atmosphere for extension of franchise to the masses. Structural differences arise among those political parties due to different nature of relations and situations existed between the masses and ruling elites. It is also largely determined by the level of political consciousness of the masses in the formation and development of those political parties. A second trend of regional political parties emerged as a result of dismantlement of a larger coalition of forces which were earlier under a single political body.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) had emerged as a result of a revolt by the backward class of people against the domination of a minority rule in the state. And a further examination of the emergence of the party clearly shows that it was spearheaded by a small forward lower caste group namely the Vellalas. With the introduction of English education and appointment to the state offices on the basis of it, and the establishment of new administrative headquarters, the Vellalas were deprived of their traditional positions in their own society. The Vellalas were having status and positions in Tamil Society due to their association and participation in the temple administration. The backward class movement changed its trend and reduced the tone of anti-Brahman, and gradually the ‘anti-Aryan’, ‘anti-Hindi’ and ‘anti-North’ when the reservation policy was introduced. But the fact was that the forward lower caste group could enjoy it and the larger masses remained in a state of confusion without any benefit from it. Such an atmosphere allows the existence of the movements and the existence of support to their political parties.
The Akali Dal in Punjab also similarly emerged as a movement of the Akali masses against the corrupted ‘mahants’. In the case of politics of Punjab, the closer relationship between religion and politics produces a different orientation in the organisation and workings of the political party.

The National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir had started as a movement by a depressed Muslim masses against the minority Hindu rule in the then Kashmir Princely State. The much communal colour in the party was timely replaced by a secular term in its nomenclature. It was the leadership of the party that steered the party in a secular perspective.

The emergence of the Telugu Desham in Andhra Pradesh was the result of the disintegration of coalition forces under the ‘Congress System’. This degeneration of the ‘Congress System’ was reflected in the forms of factionalism and defection in the party and repeated changes of leadership in the ministries. The capacity of the party in the exploitation of regional sentiments in the beginning and a good management capacity subsequently, enables the Telegu Desham Party to exist as a powerful regional political party in the state.

The second chapter highlighted the kind of political consciousness in the Princely State of Manipur on the eve of Independence of India when democratic institutions were to be introduced. The growth of political awareness and consciousness was embarked by a traditional nature of movements in both the hills and the valley of Manipur. The nature of movement on the eve of independence and just after independence in Manipur was led by the Meitei elites with a few countable tribal leaders of the state. The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha and later on the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, was at a rest unable to accommodate all the forces to move into the new political culture and system. Though it had a far-reaching consequence, the movement never came forward as a solid united movement
of all people representing the hills and valley. As a result, different forces emerged from it and worked in their own ways when democratic values, particularly the franchise were extended under the leadership of the Maharaja of Manipur.

The third chapter shows a brief account of the nature of regional political parties emerged in the state. It clearly shows that most of these political parties were small and weak. Most of them were active only at the time of election. Their existence was also of a short duration.

The trend of the emergence of the regional political parties has been a continuing process till date in Manipur. Most of them, however, were originated as a result of factionalism inside the major political parties, mainly out of competition for leadership in the organisation and in the government.

The working of these regional political parties in the state repeatedly shows that many regional parties were unable to survive a longer period and they had a tendency for merging with some other parties whenever opportunities were available at the time of formation of government.

The fourth chapter shows that the Manipur People’s Party had emerged as a result of a factionalism and conflict in the ‘Congress system’. Factionalism and defections had started in the State Committee of the Congress party. The game of denying party ticket and expulsion of party members were started in the Congress party in the state in 1967-68. Y. Yaima Singh, late S. Tombi Singh, Kh. Chaoba Singh, who were founder members of the MPP were the victims of that process of dismantlement in the State Committee of the Congress party. This group of ex-Congressmen embraced the ideology and policy and programme of the youth movement during that period in Manipur. It had provided opportunity to the newly emerging MPP to expand its base and popularity, particularly in the valley.
The Kuki National Assembly (KNA) emerged in the second part of 1940s when franchise was being introduced in the state. It was the Kuki Chiefs who spearheaded in the formation of the party. It also clearly shows that the leadership taken by the Chiefs guided the party with their traditional outlook and interests. Thus, the land-settlement issue which was an important issue raised by the party, was also a major issue relating to the interest of the Kuki Chiefs.

The MPP could expand its base beyond the valley. Its candidates from the hill areas and from among the Muslims were elected in the Assembly elections. Besides, it could produce its leadership from among the tribal and Muslim population of the state. The KNA, on the other hand, was unable to extend its organisational base beyond the Kuki population in the hills.

Factionalism and defection were found to be the main factors affecting the smooth working of both the parties.

The analysis in Chapter V shows a picture of organisational structure of both MPP and KNA parties. The analysis was mainly based on their constitution and opinion of selective leaders of the parties. Both the parties have roughly similar organisational structures. The party presidents were the key figure and controlled the whole organisation of the parties.

Regarding party leadership, the MPP was dominated by those leaders committed to mainstream ideologies of India. Later on it was mixed with those leaders who believed in sub-nationalistic ideologies. The KNA could not withdraw from its traditional leadership.

The sixth chapter provided a detailed report of Assembly elections participated by the MPP and the KNA in the state. The study has concentrated more on the role and working of both the parties in the ruling as well as in the opposition in the state. The MPP had raised the issues of inclusion of
Manipur language in the VIII Schedule to the Constitution of India, removal of ‘Armed Forces Special Power (Manipur & Assam) Act, 1958, the establishment of Medical College, Agriculture College, Engineering College, a University, establishment of industries, protection of culture and tradition of the people of both the hills and the valley in the state, modernisation of education and agriculture. Recently the protection of the integrity of the state was included in its election manifestos. It also included those policies and programmes of the government led by the MPP. Some of those programmes were accomplished whereas others remained only in paper. The KNA was a coalition partner in the MPP-led coalition ministries, and as such it also shared both credit and criticism of the performances of the coalition ministries. The KNA as a party and as a member of the coalition ministry failed to achieve its much awaited demand of creating the ‘Sadar Hill District’ in Manipur.

Both the MPP and the KNA remained ‘small parties’ numerically inside the Legislative Assembly whenever they were in opposition. They could organise rallies, bandh and other constitutional methods as opposition parties.

Findings:

From the study of the role and working of the MPP and the KNA, the following findings may be noted:

(i) Both the political parties had emerged in an atmosphere when democratic values and practices are extended or expanded to the masses;

(ii) The emergence of the regional political parties namely the Manipur People’s Party and the Kuki National Assembly is an effect of multiplicity of forces in the society and at the same
time of the failure of consensus or integration of those forces; and

(iii) The working and functioning of regional political parties do not indicate different line of political direction. The achievement and the failure of the Manipur People's Party and the Kuki National Assembly in the ruling as well as in the opposition largely depend on the pattern of leadership and strength of the parties in and outside the Legislative Assembly.