CHAPTER-II

SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN MANIPUR DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

1. INTRODUCTION

2. THE WOMEN'S AGITATION OF 1904

3. THE KUKI REBELLION, 1917-1919

4. THE JADONANG MOVEMENT OF 1930S

5. THE SECOND WOMEN AGITATION OF 1939

6. THE NIHIL HINDU MANIPURI MAHASABHA

7. MEASURES FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE MAHARAJA

8. THE MANIPUR STATE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1947

9. THE MANIPUR STATE HILL PEOPLE'S (ADMINISTRATION) REGULATION, 1947

10. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS INTEGRATION WITH INDIA
Chapter-II
SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN MANIPUR
DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

1. INTRODUCTION:

The decade 1930s was a turning point in the political history of Manipur. Though there were some smaller movements earlier in the state, the anti-colonial and anti-feudal movements started during the period gave a tremendous and lasting effect to the establishment of a new political set-up in the state. These movements were similar in some respect, particularly in the method, with that of the freedom movement launched in other parts of India, though the movements in Manipur did not have a direct bearing with the Indian freedom movement. Some Manipuris, who got education from outside the state, conceived an idea of an integrated Pan-Manipuri platform, and later on, to move Manipur into a modern political system with a popularly represented government in the state. In those days perusing education outside the state was very costly and learning English was unpopular. Thus English education was confined to a very few selected families. Besides, very bad communication inside and outside the state, poor socio-cultural relations and political interactions with other people and institutions outside the state were responsible for the low level of education in Manipur. Those people who went outside on pilgrimage rarely understood and interacted with the freedom movement and its participants in other states.

---

1 It is said that learning English was considered impure and those going for English education had to change their clothes before entering their houses. Even Maharaja Churachand Singh, the King of Manipur went to Cachar to attend the 2nd session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipur Mahasabha in 1935, on foot with his followers along the old Cachar road.

2
In the hills of Manipur also, very few people could go outside the state. Some of the tribal people were recruited as members of the labour corps during the First World War by the British. The level of education was low and very few were interested in politics during the British period. To satisfy the aspirations of the people, political reforms and movements for a responsible government were taken up with the initiative of the Maharaja in the 1940s on the line prescribed by the Chamber of Princes and the Cabinet Mission from time to time. For all such measures, approvals of the Governor of Assam through the political Agent in Manipur were necessary. Thus, the process for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur was taken up from the early 1940s.

Factionalism among the political elites of Manipur was an important factor for the slow progress in the achievement of political goal of having a responsible democratic government. The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, 1934, the first socio-political organisation in Manipur, largely composed of elites, demanded in the beginning for a popular government. When it became a purely political organisation in 1938, there were different opinions among its leaders. Thus, the Mahasabha failed to achieve its goal and was unable to provide the right platform.

Behind such a background, the process for a responsible government in Manipur started with the framing of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. Again, when the question of merger of the state into the Indian Dominion and later Indian Union arose a popular public opinion could not be articulated to carry the process of political developments in the state though Manipur already had a State Assembly.

---

2. **The Women’s Agitation of 1904:**

In the middle of 1904, three bungalows\(^4\) of British Officers in Manipur were burnt to the ground. The persons directly involved in the incident could not be identified. On the basis of “a stick with an oil rag attached”, the Britishers decided that the burning was a work of urban people of Manipur.\(^5\) Thus, the state administration passed an order that new bungalows should be constructed by all male members of Imphal area.\(^6\) The male members were helpless and very reluctantly at last made themselves ready to construct the bungalows. The womenfolk in the area thought that the order was unjust and they were much agitated by it.

It has been a common occurrence in Manipur that whenever some incident happened, and no one, even the male group of the society, was unable to come forward and rescue from the happening of the incident, the womenfolk in group spontaneously come forward as the last line of defence and they fought for the cause. In the case of the burning of bungalows also, the womenfolk prepared themselves to launch an agitation against the administrative order and the construction of the bungalows. A few leaders of the agitation were (1) Smt. Irengbam Ongbi Samujaobi Devi of Khwai Lamabam Leikai, Imphal, (2) Smt Leisangthem Kwathabi Devi,


The woman resisted the male members who were approaching the bungalow site. The state administration took up stern measures to stop womenfolk to approach towards the bungalow site by deploying forces at all bridges and roads connecting the bungalow area. The womenfolk reached the bungalow site by swimming into the rivers and vacated the male-folk, who had already reached the place and started preparation for construction of the bungalow.\(^8\) On facing the grave situation of the agitation of women, the British authorities at last decided to withdraw the order of reconstruction of the bungalow.

The span of the agitation was short. But it gave a great impact to the people of Manipur in the coming years to launch anti-colonial and anti-feudal movements in the state.

3. **The Kuki Rebellion, 1917-1919:**

In April 1917, the Kukis in Manipur and later on in her surrounding areas, in a well organised form rose in a rebellion against the British. The rebellion carried on upto 1919 and it spreaded over in most of hill areas of Manipur. The immediate cause of the rebellion was the objection of the Kuki Chiefs against the recruitment and sending of their subjects for a second time to war front with the labour corps during World War-I.

\(^7\) ibid. p. 3.

\(^8\) ibid.
Economically, Kukis were dependent on 'Jhum' or shifting cultivation. They carried on trade with the plains particularly on their forest produces and products. They purchased their day-to-day commodities like clothes, salt, etc. from the plains.

There was a change in the position and power of the Chiefs with the creation of 'lambus,' acted as hill peons, interpreters and sometimes advisors to the British officials, under the British administration of hill areas in Manipur. The 'lambus' gradually became closer to the rulers and the rulers more and more depended on them rather than the Chiefs in administration. This new position enjoyed by the 'lambus' and the relative decline in the position of the Chiefs created resentment among the Kuki Chiefs. The 'lambus' also took bribe from the hill men at the time of recruitment for the labour corps.

During World War-I, the Maharaja of Manipur donated a sum of Rs.1,34,000/- as war loan to the British and raised a Manipur labour corps. For the labour corps, 2000 Nagas and Kukis were recruited and sent much against their will to France in May, 1917. They were engaged in digging fences, carrying loads and building base camps.

The Kuki Chiefs strongly objected to the proposal of recruitment for the labour corps for a second batch. Higgins, the Political Agent, met a deputation of Chiefs and discussed the problem of recruitment. After a long discussion, the Chiefs agreed to offer money instead of giving coolies. Later, Higgins ordered that they had either to supply recruits or submit to

10 ibid. p.13.
12 ibid.
punishment. As a challenge to the stern measures of recruitment, Ngalkhup, the Chief of Mombi, warned his tribesmen that if they sent their men for recruitment their villages would be burnt and their women and children be killed. Higgins took the warning of the Mombi Chief as an issue of prestige and proceeded to Mombi to punish the Chief on 17 October 1917. On failure to arrest the Chief Higgins burnt down the village.

Meanwhile, Chingakham Sanajaoaba Singh of Kameng in Nambol, who professed to have supernatural power, spread a rumour that the Kingdom of British was coming to an end then and it wanted its people to be killed at the same time with them. He went to Ukha and formed an alliance with the Chiefs of Mombi, Longya, Henglep and Ukha. They looted the forest tool station at Ithai near Moirang on 19th December, 1917. A series of raids on police stations near Sugnu and Moirang areas were carried out by the Kukis. The role of Sanajaoba Singh in the initial stage of the rebellion was tremendous. On the charge of an initiator of the Kuki rebellion against the British and Government of Maharaja, he was arrested and deported to Andaman and Nicobar Island for life.

For an operation against the Kukis, the hill areas of Manipur was divided into four divisions and they were put under the charges of British officers. The four areas were (1) Jampi area, it comprises the Western hills of Manipur; (2) Henglep area, the south-west part spreading upto some parts of the valley; (3) Mombi area, the south-eastern parts of the hill areas,
and (4) Chatsat area, the north-eastern hills. The operation was carried out in a large scale. It was also supported by detachment of 3rd Assam Rifles from Kohima, the Burmese military police and the British forces stationed in Chin Hills.

The Kuki Chiefs were either killed during the operation or arrested by the British forces and some others surrendered to the authority. The British government made a number of charges against the Kuki Chiefs. The common charges were organisation of objection against the recruitment for labour corps.\textsuperscript{18}

The main cause of the rebellion was the loose and weak administration of the hill areas. The areas were very poor in communication and the tribal villages spreaded far and wide on the top of hills. For the Kukis, the traditional position and powers of the Chiefs were disturbed by the creation of the ‘lambus’ during the British administration. Thus, a very limited manpower of administration under the President of the Darbar was unable to control and run the administration of the hill people effectively.

4. The Jadonang Movement of 1930s:

Jadonang, a Kabui Naga born in 1905 at Kambiron in Tamenglong district, initiated a movement having social, religious and political objectives. He wanted a “political integration” of his people under a kingdom after achieving social unity through religion.\textsuperscript{19} He demonstrated that he also could do like a British.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, he organized youths of his tribe for a revolt against the British.

\textsuperscript{18} Kipgen, Th. op. cit. p. 45.
\textsuperscript{19} Lal Dena, op. cit. p. 136
\textsuperscript{20} Meijinlungh Kamsong, Ex-M.P. and an Ex-Part Time Lecturer in J.N.U., told
He trained youths and girls in secret war strategies. He gave the slogan “Makan meirui Gwang Tupuni”, meaning “his people will become Kings”. Gaidinliu, a 13 years old girl by that time, took up Jadonang’s programme as the commander of the girls.

The Jadonang movement could not be carried out practically during the life time of Jadonang himself as he was hanged by the British on the charge of killing four Meitei traders. His lieutenant Rani Gaidinliu, after Jadonang, carried out the movement started by Jadonang.

Rani Gaidinliu raised the revolt in 1931 against the British government from Manipur, Naga Hills and the North Cachar Hills of Assam. Her movement also had socio-religious and cultural aims. Socially, she wanted to integrate the three Naga kindred tribes namely, the Zemi, the Liangmei and the Rongmei, known as Zeliangrong; she wanted the preservation of Traditional Naga culture and her political programme was the translation of Jadonang’s policy and programme. Both Jadonang and Gaidinliu admired M.K. Gandhi and his movement.

Gaidinliu prepared to face the superior British forces. She started construction of a strong and large fortress in Pulomi village. J.P. Mills, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, with whom the operation against Gaidinliu was to be centralised, got information about the plans of Gaidinliu. He despatched a strong force of Assam Rifles under the command of captain Macdonald, accompanied by Hari Blah to Pulomi. By the time when

---

21 Lal Dena. op. cit. p. 136.
22 ibid. p. 140.
23 ibid. p. 141.
24 ibid.
25 ibid. p. 143.
Macdonald attacked the Pulomi village, the construction of the fortress was not in complete form. The rebels were not ready to resist the attack. They surrendered and Gaidinliu was arrested.

5. **The Second Women Agitation of 1939:**

In December 1939, another women agitation known as Second Nupilan broke out in Manipur. This second agitation had a wider and greater impact than that of the first agitation of 1904.

In mid 1939 the Marwari businessmen purchased and collected huge amount of paddy from the farmers at a low rate. There were fourteen rice mills, one was at Sekhmai about 20 kms. from Imphal and also a rural area, and thirteen were at Imphal town in Manipur. There was no government godowns to stock food grains. The rice mill owners were the agents of exportation of rice. There was no definite policy regarding foodstuffs. Thus, there was no prescribed ceiling of stockpiling rice by the mill owners.

Usually, rice were brought and sold in various market places around the Imphal town by farmers from rural areas. People purchased rice from these markets in retail price. But the purchasing capacity of general public in 1939 was extremely low that they could not purchase a “Sangbai” or “Leekhai” (local measures of grains particularly paddy in Manipur) of paddy. The businessmen sold their paddy directly to the mill owners. As a result, paddy was not available for sale in the markets. Thus, the womenfolk, not finding rice for small trade and commerce and for consumption in the Khwairamband market, started an agitation. They even stopped the selling of rice in bulk to the mill owners directly.
On 11 December, 1939 the womenfolk went to lodge a complaint regarding the scarcity of rice in the market, to the political Agent of Manipur. But they could not meet him as he went out on a tour. Later on, the women approached the office of the Manipur State Darbar. They met the Darbar members and stated that they could not purchase rice in the market due to the bulk purchase of paddy by the mill owners. They demanded that the exportation of rice and husking of paddy in the mills be stopped immediately. Some of the Darbar members, after listening the complaint of the women, asked them to discuss the matter next day.

On 12th December 1939, the womenfolk gathered at Khwairamband market and went to Darbar office led by Smt. Aribam Chaobiton Devi, Smt. Loitam Tombimacha Devi, Smt. Laishram ongba Ibehnal, Smt. Brahmacharimayum Khambi Devi, etc. They met T.A. Sharp, the President of the Darbar and demanded the immediate stoppage of exportation of rice and the operation of rice mills for some time. T.A. Sharp replied that he could do nothing but agreed to send a telegraphic message to the Maharaja, who was at Nawadeep. The President and the women went to the Telegraph office. After sending the telegram, the President expressed to have his launch. But the womenfolk insisted to stay on.

The state police and security forces came to the Telegraph office. When the situation became tense, the personnel of the Assam Rifles charged with bayonet fitted rifles upon the women. The police also lathi-charged the women. Many wounded women fell on the ground in the campus of Telegraph office, Imphal.26

---

26 L. Ibobi Singh. op. cit. pp 45-46.
After the 12 December, 1939 incident, the members of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and some politically conscious men joined the agitation. One Moirangthem Chandra Singh organised a meeting of public leaders at Pureiromba Khongnangkhong, Wangkhei, Imphal on the agenda of bayonet charges on the innocent women. The meeting also prepared a representation on the matters relating to the bayonet charges by the sepoys, to be submitted to the Political Agent. Another public meeting was held at Policeland ground, Imphal on 13 December, 1939. The meeting passed the following resolutions:

1. to stop the working of the rice mills;
2. to stop all vehicles carrying paddy loads on the Imphal-Dimapur Road (now National Highway No.39) by squatting day and night;
3. to stop all bullock carts carrying paddy loads to the rice mills for sale;
4. to close the Khwairamband market during the period of agitation and suffering.

The meeting also resolved to execute those resolutions with immediate effect.

In accordance with the resolution, the women destroyed the rice mills, stopped the carrying paddy loads and destroyed the paddy carried by the bullock carts. The Khwairamband market was closed for about 8/9 months during the agitation. The agitation was also aimed to defy various kind of

---

27 ibid. p. 52.  
28 ibid. p. 57.  
29 When the Khwairamband market was closed, markets started opening at the Cheirap ground and the Policeland, Imphal. Ibid. p. 63; Rajani Devi. 1985. Nupeelal. Imphal: the Author. p.90.
laws relating to restriction on cutting ‘simul’ trees, not to provide night guards, not to pay charges for crossing river on government boats, illegal collection of fishes from government controlled ponds and lakes, etc.

On 18 January 1940, five women\textsuperscript{30} leaders of the agitation were arrested on the charge of destroying rice mills. Many other women were also arrested on the charges of non-cooperation in the later part of the agitation.

The second women agitation was responsible for raising the political awareness of the people. The people were conscious about the foreign rule, resulting in the economic exploitation of the people.

6. **The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha:**

In 1934 a socio-cultural organization called the “Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha” was formed under the presidenship of the Maharaja Churachand Singh, the King of Manipur. The Mahasabha aimed at the integration of Manipuris residing in different places, such as Manipur, Burma (now Myanmar), Assam, Tripura, etc. Its annual conferences were also held in different places. Thus it had its 2\textsuperscript{nd} conference at Silchar and the 3\textsuperscript{rd} at Mandale in Burma. Up to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} conference the Mahasabha was purely a non-political organization. But in its 4\textsuperscript{th} session at Chinga ground in Imphal in 1938, the Mahasabha became a political organization. Some of its major political resolutions adopted in the “Chinga session” were (1) introduction of a full responsible government in Manipur; (2) abolition of feudal levies, (3) release of Rani Gaidinliu, etc.

The Chinga session of the Mahasabha was held on 29th and 30th December, 1938.\textsuperscript{31} The session was presided by H. Irabot Singh. In addition to its adoption of political resolutions, the Mahasabha also made itself a wide-base organization by removing the word ‘Hindu’ from its name. Thus, the name of the Mahasabha was called “Nikhil Manipur \textsuperscript{32} Mahasabha”. The session elected H.Irabot Singh and Chingakham Pishak Singh as the President and General Secretary of the Mahasabha.\textsuperscript{33}

After the Chinga session, the Mahasabha took up various social reforms. The members of the Mahasabha belonging to different castes and religions started taking food together defying the then existing caste barriers, particularly in Mahasabha sessions.

There was difference of opinion among the members of the Mahasabha on the question of extension of help to the women during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Women’s Agitation of December 1939. One group of the working committee, consisting of three members namely Shri Lalitamadhop Sharma, Bankabihari Sharma and Khwairakpam Magha Singh, thought that the Mahasabha should extend help to the wounded and suffering women. On the other hand, Shri Laikhuram Khagendra Singh, Karam Bidur Singh and Takhelmayum Amuselung, the other three members of the working committee, thought that the Mahasabha, in spite of the help to the women, should start a political movement in

\textsuperscript{31} L.Ibobi Singh. op. cit. p.33
\textsuperscript{32} Instead of the word ‘Manipuri’ it was said to be changed as ‘Manipur’, L. Yaima Singh & R.K. Maipak Singh (Ed.). op. cit. p. 171.
\textsuperscript{33} Other members of the Working Committee were Shri Lalitamadhop Sharma, Shri Bankabihari Sharma, Shri Elangbam Tompok Singh, Shri Nongmaithem Thanil Singh, Shri Sinam Krishnachhiton Singh, Shri Nongmeikapam Nabakishwor Singh, Shri R.K. Ratansana Singh, Shri Laishram Jugeshwar Singh, Shri Laikhuram Khagendrajit Singh, Shri Keisam Kunjabihar Singh, etc. ibid. p.33.
Manipur like other political parties in other parts of India, for introducing responsible government in the state. But the issue could not be resolved as the president of the Mahasabha, Shri Hijam Irabot Singh was at Cachar in Assam.\(^{34}\)

On arrival of Irabot at Imphal, a working committee meeting of the Mahasabha was convened on 7 January, 1940. In the meeting, the difference on the question of extending help to the women agitation and the initiation of a political movement could not be resolved. At last, voting was exercised. The president and his group moved a motion for starting a political movement by the Mahasabha besides its help to be extended to the women. But the opposition outnumbered the motion.\(^{35}\)

After coming out of the Mahasabha, Irabot and some other members of the Mahasabha held a meeting on the same day at Policeland ground with Shri Laikhum Khagendrajit Singh in the chair. The meeting discussed on several points, particularly about the feudal levies like “Pothang Santri”, “Chandan Senkhai”, taxes on planting ‘simul’ trees, etc. The meeting also decided not to pay those taxes/levies. Thus, the meeting at last formed a new political party called “Manipur Praja Sammelani”.\(^{36}\)

Thus, a strong movement for making a reform in the political system in the state started. The Maharaja of the state was also under pressure both from inside the state by the movement, and from outside the state by the agents of the Government of India. The Maharaja had to initiate the process for the introduction of democratic responsible government in Manipur.

\(^{34}\) ibid. p. 65.
\(^{35}\) ibid. pp. 68-69.
\(^{36}\) ibid. p. 72.
7. **Measures for establishment of responsible Government and the role of the Maharaja:**

The measures taken up for the introduction of a responsible government in the state during the period between 1947 and 1949 was a consequence of the colonial and feudal administrative rules and system prevalent for a long time in the state. The movement for establishment of a responsible government in Manipur started as early as 1937. The demand was supported by various sections of the society. Under the leadership of Irabot the people boycotted the feudal laws imposed by the Maharaja. He was in close touch with the peasants, rural villagers and outcaste people in the state. He with his followers organised and participated ‘saradhas’ and other ceremonies of those downtrodden people.

Many leaders of the Mahasabha resigned from state service after its being converted into a political organisation and as a response to the restriction of the Maharaja to join political parties by state employees. Shri E. Tompok and H. Irabot singh also resigned from the government service in order to continue their political activities. Now the Mahasabha came out with a sole objective of establishing a democratic government in Manipur.

Other political parties like the Manipur State Congress, the Praja Sangha and the Socialist Party, etc. also participated in the movement. In the last week of November 1947 the leftist group of the Manipur State Congress launched an agitation for the establishment of responsible government in the state. They adopted ‘packetting’ as one of the methods of the agitation. They also submitted several resolutions. To quote a resolution dated 2nd November, 1947:

---

"The Manipur State Congress demands the establishment of responsible government within 48 (forty-eight) hours and it should be operated before 1948, in order to fulfil the grievances of the people."\(^{40}\)

The Manipur Praja Sangha also submitted memorandum and hold public meetings in relation to the establishment of a responsible government. Feeling the needs of a co-ordinating body of all political parties, the Praja Sangha convened a meeting of the representatives of the Tangkhulong, the Kuki National Assembly, the Kabui Association, the Kuki Union, the Mizo Union, the Praja Sangha, the Krishak Sabha, etc. at M.D.U. in November 1947 and it formed an United Front for demanding full responsible government in Manipur. \(^{41}\)

The Maharaja could no longer remain silent to the demand of the people. He decided to introduce a responsible and popular government in the state. To quote Shri Debeswar Sharma, the then Donminion Agent in Manipur:

"Because of the growing demand of the people for the establishment of responsible government in Manipur, His Highness the Maharaja, I am informed, has been pleased to concede to this desire of the people."\(^{42}\)

Sensing the gravity of democratic movement in other parts of India, both British India and the Native States, Maharaja Bodhachandra took up initiative for introduction of a responsible government in the state. The exercise taken up for a change in administration and government of the state was a response of the state government to the movement raised by the then elites of the state during 1938-1940. However, it was delayed by

\(^{40}\) The Bhagabati Patrika dated 10-11-1947.
\(^{42}\) The Praja, (a daily) dt. 11-11-1947.
World War II; Manipur being a war theatre by that time. It also must be noted that the initiative taken up by the Maharaja for the introduction of a responsible government in the last part of 1940s was also under the instruction of the Chamber of Princes and H.E. the Governor of Assam.43

As a part of his initiative to introduce a full responsible government, the Maharaja started the process with the making of a Constitution Making Committee. The composition of the Constitution Making Committee was proposed as given below: 44

(1) 3(three) members nominated by the President, Manipur State Darbar (P.M.S.D.) from the Darbar, including P.M.S.D. himself as the Chairman of the Committee;
(2) 1(one) member deputed by the Chairman, Chief Court, from the Judicial Department;
(3) 1(one) member nominated by His Highness from the Palace;
(4) 1(one) representative deputed by each of the Tahasils;
(5) 1(one) representative deputed by each of the Areas Viz. Ukhrul, Mao, Tamenglong, Churachandpur and S.E. area.

Further, the constitution framed by the committee would require the sanction of the Darbar and the approval of His Highness the Maharaja.45

---

43 Maharaja expressed this point in his correspondence with the Political Agent in Manipur. D.O.No. 660, P II-I dated 30-10-46 from Maharaja to Political Agent. Resistance: 11-1-77. p. 6.
44 The Resistance: 15-2-1977. p.6
Accordingly, notices for the formation of the Constitution Making Committee were published. The Manipur Praja Sangha organised public meetings in various places in the valley as a protest against the notices on the ground that those were of “hasty and ambiguous terms.” But the protest was neither cared by Maharaja nor published by the Bhagyabati Pratika. Thus, the Manipur Praja Sangha boycotted the process of forming the Constitution Making Committee and it left the field open to the Manipur State Congress.

5(five) representatives from the plains were elected and another 5(five) representatives from the hills were nominated by the authority to be the members of the Constitution Making Committee. There were representatives of the hills like the Kukis, the Tangkhul, the Lushais, the Mars and the Koms.

Despite the widespread dissatisfaction among the people in the nature of formation of the Constitution Making Committee, the committee was formed and inaugurated by the Maharaja on 10 March, 1947. The Chairman of the Committee was Mr. F.F. Pearson, P.M.S.D. The composition of the committee was as follows:

1. Mr. F.F. Pearson, P.M.S.D. - Chairman
2. Shri S. Samarendra Singh - Member
3. Md. Quazi Walliula - do-
4. Shri L.M. Ibungohal Singh - do-

---

46 One notice of this kind was issued by Mr. S. Somarendra Singh, the Jail Member of the state Darbar on 24-12-46 and it was published in Bhagyabati Patrika of 26-12-1946. A similar public notice was also published on 6-1-47 (in English) and on 4-1-47 (in Manipuri in the same paper).
48 ibid.
5. Shri Asangbam Minaketan Singh - -do-
6. Shri H. Dwijamani Sharma - -do-
7. Shri S. Krishnamohon Singh - -do-
8. Shri Dr. Leiren Singh - -do-
9. Shri L. Jugeshwar Singh - -do-
10. Shri L. Mera Singh - -do-
11. Mr. A. Daiho - -do-
12. Mr. Thangkhopao - -do-
13. Mr. M.K. Shimre - -do-
14. Mr. Teba Kilong - -do-
15. Mr. Tengkham - -do-

With a high hope, the Maharaja delivered his inaugural address at the Constitution Making Body:

"A Constitution-Making Body is now formed . . . to submit to me a Draft Constitution for the governance of the state of tomorrow. . . The Draft Constitution is intended to have for its basis such democratic principles as will in no way prejudice our past in its main aspects and will, on the other hand, bridge the present back to it to produce a resultant peaceful future." 49

The Constitution Making Committee took two months in drafting the constitution. The constitution was completed by May 15, 1947. 50

50 ibid: 5-4-1977. p.6.
8. **The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947:**

The constitution provided for a constitutional monarchy in Manipur. It consisted of 11 (eleven) chapters. The first chapter deals with the title, extend and application of the government of the state and the succession, the attainment of majority, and the Council of Regency. The second chapter provides 'Definitions' in the Act. The third chapter explains about the Executive and the fourth about the State Assembly. The fifth chapter deals with the Law making authority. The 'Finance' is provided in sixth chapter. The seventh chapter covers the Hill people. The eighth chapter deals with services. The ninth includes the judicature. The tenth chapter enumerated the Fundamental Rights and Duties of citizenship. Lastly, the eleventh chapter makes the provisions for the "General Clauses". At the end of the constitution it contains the signature of the Maharaja.

8.1. **Maharaja:** The Maharaja was the Head of state. The administration of the state was to carry on in his name. "All rights, authority and jurisdiction which appertain or are incidental to the government of such territories are exercisable by the Maharaja subject to the provision of this Act."\(^{51}\)

The Maharaja could with-hold his assent to a bill and the "Bill shall lapse as if it had not been passed".\(^{52}\) A bill which did not receive the assent of the Maharaja in a 'calendar' month was regarded with-held. But a veto power was effective only for one session on a bill.

The constitution also provides the Maharaja ordinance making power. During emergencies Maharaja-in-Council possessed power to promulgate "orders having the force of law" without previous reference to the Assembly.

---

\(^{51}\) Clause 3 of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947.

\(^{52}\) Clause 29. ibid.
The Maharaja also had the power to pardon a person who was given a death sentence by the Chief Court.

Succession to the throne was governed by the "Law of primogeniture". In case of the Maharaja happened to be a 'minor' or "by reason of mental defect", grave bodily sickness unable to exercise his powers, a "council of regency" should exercise the powers on behalf of the Maharaja.

8.1. The Executive: The Maharaja with the Council of Ministers is the Executive of the state. The Council of Ministers consisted of the Chief Minister and six other Ministers. The six ministers were elected by the State Assembly from amongst the elected members of the Assembly with a condition that two of them should be from the representatives of Hill areas.

The Chief Minister was appointed by the Maharaja in consultation with the elected ministers of the Council. The Chief Minister presided over the Council.

The Council of Ministers were responsible to the Maharaja but not to the State Assembly for the administration of the state.

8.3. The State Assembly: The State Assembly was composed of fifty-three members. Thirty members were from the general constituencies, eighteen from the Hills and three were represented by Mahamadan community. There were provisions for two more representatives for the educational and commercial 'interests' group. The term of the Assembly was three years. The representatives were elected freely by the people on adult franchise and on the principle of joint electorate.

---

53 Clause 10(e). ibid.
54 Clause 17. ibid.
The Maharaja-in-Council and the State Assembly constituted the Legislature of the State. The Assembly could make "alternation and amendment" in the bill. In its final form, the Chief Minister submitted the bill to the Maharaja for his assent.

The annual financial statement of the state was prepared by the Minister-in-charge of Finance and it was submitted to the Assembly within fifteen days of its meeting for the Budget session.\textsuperscript{55} The budget was discussed in the Assembly. After the discussion it was submitted to the Council. The Council with the recommendation of the Assembly could make amendments. Finally, it was submitted to the Maharaja for his approval. In the case of the Maharaja's approval was not received by the first day of the financial year, provisional effect was given to the budget as passed by the Assembly.\textsuperscript{56}

8.4. **The Judiciary:** The Chief Court was the judiciary of the state. It was consisted of one Chief Justice and other two judges. The Chief Justice and other judges were appointed by the Maharaja and they hold office until the age of 65 years. A judge could be removed from his office on the ground of 'misbehaviour' or 'of infirmity of body or of mind', by the Maharaja-in-Council.

8.5. **The State Auditor:** There was a State Auditor to be appointed by the Maharaja-in-Council. But the Maharaja appointed the person nominated by the Controller of Audit, Assam, as the auditor, for a term of five years. The Auditor performed duties as laid down in the State Account Rules.

\textsuperscript{55} Clause 34(e). ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Clause 34. ibid.
8.6. **The Fundamental Rights and Duties:** The Constitution guaranteed to all citizens equality before law and liberty. It also assured to all ‘people’ justice: social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity and worship, vocation, association and action, subject to the law and the public morality.\(^{57}\)

Every citizen was allowed to make practice of arts and sciences and they enjoyed protection and support of the State. \(^{58}\)

8.7. **Amendment of the Constitution:** Any part of the constitution could be amended. A proposal of the amendment was to be supported by at least 80% of the members of the State Assembly present and voting. An amendment to the constitution was effected only with the assent of the Maharaja.

9. **The Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation, 1947:**

The Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation, 1947 consisted of six chapters. The first chapter deals with the “Title, Extend, Commencement and Repeal”. The second chapter has the provision of “Local Authority”. The third chapter deals with the executive powers and responsibilities. “Law, justice and maintenance of public order” are dealt in Chapter IV. The fifth and sixth chapters deal with the financial provisions and the general clauses respectively.

9.1. **Administration:** The responsibilities for administration of the “Hill People” was vested in the Maharaja-in-Council.\(^{59}\) For the efficient

---

\(^{57}\) Clause 52. ibid.

\(^{58}\) Clause 53. ibid.

\(^{59}\) Manipur State Hill People’s (Administration) Regulation, 1947.
Administration in the hill areas, villages were grouped into circles and subdivisions. There was a “Circle Authority” in the circle level. A “Village Authority” was constituted by 20(twenty) tax paying houses.

9.2. **Law and Justice:** In the Circle, the “Circle Authority” was responsible for the maintenance of law and order.

The criminal justice was administered by the village authority, the Circle Authority and the Hill Bench. The courts had their jurisdictions. The court of village authority tried cases involving theft, mischief not being mischief of fire or any explosive substance, cable theft and illegal slaughter of cattle, simple hurt, and assault or using criminal force.\(^{60}\) The circle court exercised the power of a Magistrate of First Class as defined in the Criminal Procedure Code. The Hill Bench at Imphal possessed the power of a session court. It consisted of a judge of the Chief Court as the Chairman, and two Hill Members of the State Council.\(^{61}\)

The civil cases were tried by the Chief Court, the Hill Bench, the Circle Bench and the village authorities.\(^{62}\) The village authorities tried suits upto the value of Rs.500/-. A village authority had the power to try cases only of those parties residing within its jurisdiction. All suits tried by the village authority were conducted in open Darbar in the presence of parties and at least three independent witnesses.

A person, whose value of suit was not less than Rs.35/-, could appeal to the Circle Bench in the case of his dissatisfaction to the decision of the village authorities. Similarly, a person having a suit value of at least Rs.100/- could appeal to the Hill Bench against the judgement of the Circle

---

\(^{60}\) Clause 24. ibid.
\(^{61}\) Clause 26. ibid.
\(^{62}\) Clause 39. ibid.
Bench. The Hill Bench tried all suits which were beyond the jurisdiction of the village authority and the Circle Bench. Lastly, a suit having a value of less than Rs.1,000/- could be appeal to the Chief Court from the judgement of the Hill Bench.\(^{63}\)

9.3. **Financial Administration:** The Sub-Divisional Officer directed the Circle Officer to frame a budget for the circle every year in February. The Sub-Divisional Officer directed the Circle Officer to frame a budget for the circle every year in February. The Sub-Divisional Officer forwarded the budget of circles with his comment to the Minister-in-charge of the Hill Administration. Then a compiled budget was submitted to the State Finance Department by the Minister-in-Charge of Hill Administration.

9.4. **The General Clauses:** The Circle Authority had the responsibility to arrange accommodation for officers of the state travelling on duty. It was also the responsibilities of the Circle Authority to provide servants, for carrying baggage of those officers on tour and that of the Minister-in-Charge of the Hill Administration.\(^{64}\)

Election to the Legislative Assembly (and the Council of Ministers) under the newly enacted Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947, was held in 1948. Pending the election and also the formation of the Council of Ministers, the Maharaja constituted the Manipur State Council as an interim body under the provision of the “Revised Rules for the Administration of the Manipur State”, which was in force from July 1, 1947. The Maharaja was also instructed by Mr. G.P. Stewart, the Political Agent in Manipur that

\(^{63}\) Clause 47. ibid.

\(^{64}\) Clause 73. ibid.
the existing Darbar Members should continue as Ministers in charge of the portfolios then held by them until a redistribution of portfolios had been made under the revised rules.65 Mr. F.F. Pearson, the then President of the Manipur State Darbar, became the first Chief Minister of Manipur and the other Darbar Members were redesignated as Ministers in the first ever constituted Manipur State Council under the revised rules.

The Manipur State Congress, which secured 4(four) seats out of the 5(five) elected valley seats in the Constitution Making Committee, alleged that the formation of the Manipur State Council should not include the official members. Instead, it should be formed by the Manipur State Congress, since it secured majority in the elected section of the Constitution Making Committee, it argued, incorporating two Hill Ministers.66

On 13 August, 1947, the Maharaja by his order terminated the then existing council and reconstituted a new council from which Mr. S. Samarendra Singh was dropped.67 The new Manipur State Council consisted of the following members:

---

65 Memo No. 1865-MS dated 24-6-47 from G.P. Steward, Political Agent in Manipur, to Maharaja Bodhachandra, who followed the instruction vide his order No. 36p. of 1947 dated 28-6-1947.
66 Resolution No.4 dated 12-6-47 of the Manipur State Congress Working Committee Resistance 5-4-1977, p.6
67 There is a long story behind the dropping of Mr. S. Samarendra Singh from the Council. It was a result of a long enmity developed between Mr. S. Samarendra Singh and Maharaja Bodhachandra arising out of jail administration in the State. After removing from the Manipur State Council, Shri Samarendra became a 'Satyagrahi'. It was due to his sudden change over to a 'Satyagrahi' that, there arose a split in the Manipur State Congress and caused to a 'Satyagrah Andolon' in the State.
(1) Srijut Maharajkumar Capt. Priyobarta Singh, B.A. - Chief Minister, Home Department.
(3) Mr. Bashiruddin Ahmed, B.A. - Jail, Medical and P.W.D.
(4) Sjt. S. Krishnamohon Singh-M.A., B.L. - Finance, Commerce, Industries, Forest, Agriculture and Veterinary
(5) Sjt. R.K. Bhubonsana Singh - Revenue.
(in place of Tompok Singh)

It was also noted that the rest of portfolios would be held by the Chief Minister until other Ministers were appointed. 68

10. Political Developments Towards Integration with India:

Preparations for the election to the Manipur State Assembly 1948, which was first of its kind in her political history, were taken up after completion of the making of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. ‘Franchise Sub-Committee’ was formed with Shri L. Ibongohal Singh as its Chairman. The Sub-Committee drafted the ‘Rules for the election and Election petition for the year 1947-48’. According to the Election Rules, only those literate, bonafide resident and non-government servants were eligible to contest the election. The totalumber of constituencies was 53 and the election was held in June, 1948.

The results of the election \(^6^9\) were announced in batches. In some constituencies, candidates were elected uncontested. The final list of the result was declared on 20\(^{th}\) August, 1948.\(^7^0\) No single party secured the majority in the House.

There were about two-dozen election cases before the Election Tribunal and some of them were very critical and difficult to be disposed of. Alimuddin's case was one of them. The cause of the case was that in the Lilong special constituency two members, one for general and other one for Muslims, had to be elected. But, in the election both the seats went in favour of Muslims, i.e. Md. Abdul Kadir Khand and Md. Alimuddin.

The period was also a crucial time as the process of integration of princely states into the Indian Dominion had been going on rigorously. There were proposals for making groups of the North-Eastern states and areas to integrate into the Indian Dominion and later on to the Indian Union. One proposal was the creation of the “Purbanchal” and the other was the creation of the “Frontier Hill State”. The proposed ‘Purbanchal’ state included Manipur, Tripura, Cachar, Lushai Hills, etc.\(^7^1\) Though this plan was more popular, it was objected by both Manipur and Assam. The second proposal was objected by the Manipur State Congress. The proposal as to create a state comprising Manipur, Nagas Hills and Lushai Hills.\(^7^2\)

---

\(^6^9\) A full length study of the Election, 1948 is made in the next Chapter, i.e. Chapter III of this Thesis.

\(^7^0\) The Resistance. 21-3-1978. p.6.

\(^7^1\) Supplementary Memorandum to the State Reorganisation Commission. submitted by the Manipur State Congress on 5-5-1955 p.8.

\(^7^2\) ibid. p.14.
There were political tensions in the hill areas in the state. In the Mao area, the northern part of the state, the “Naga People’s League” under the leadership of A. Daiho started a movement for integration of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur into the Naga Hills.\textsuperscript{73} The movement reached its height. There was a similar movement in the south-west Manipur by the Mizo Union. They also demanded Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur to be merged with Lushai Hills. \textsuperscript{74}

The people in the hill areas of Manipur strongly opposed the integration. A special meeting of the hill M.L.As. was held on 27\textsuperscript{th} July 1949 at Imphal with S. Lune in the Chair.\textsuperscript{75} The meeting strongly resolved that the plain people should not take responsibility for the integration of the hill areas of Manipur into the Indian Dominion.

There were two great opinions among the people\textsuperscript{76} of Manipur on the question of Manipur’s integration into the Indian Dominion. One group wanted an immediate merger of Manipur into the Indian Dominion. It was led by the Manipur State Congress. The second group did not want a complete merger. This opinion was supported by the hill people and those in the ruling party.

In the midst of those different shades of opinion, the process of integration and later on, merger of the State into the Indian Union had been going on. The Manipur State Council resolved to accept the execution of

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{The Lamyanka} (a Manipuri Monthly, November, 1973). P. 27.
\textsuperscript{76} By that time majority people in Manipur was illiterate and any movement was spearheaded by a few urban based educated people. Thus, the so called opinion of people was not the true expression of all people.
the Standstill Agreement and the Instrument of Accession in its meeting held on 11 August, 1947. The instrument of Accession was executed on the same day i.e. on 11 August, 1947.

Maharaja Bodhachandra visited Shillong on 17th September 1949 with his few officials. He was disappointed when he was asked to sign the ‘Merger Agreement’. The Maharaja refused to sign without the consent of his council and that of the people of Manipur. However, in the afternoon of September 21, 1949, the Maharaja signed the “Merger Agreement” at the Government House in Shillong. With the signing of this agreement the Maharaja of Manipur ceded Manipur to the Dominion Government “full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the government of the state.”

11. **CONCLUSION:**

The women agitation of 1904 had given a great impact to the people of Manipur in future to launch anti-colonial and anti-feudal movements in the state.

In the hill areas of Manipur, the tribal people started revolt against the colonial and feudalistic rule of the state. The Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919 and the Jadonang movement of 1930s were expression of those revolts.

The impact of the second women agitation, 1939 was greater than that of the first agitation. The main cause of the second agitation was economic. As such, the effect was spreaded far and wide in the state. It expressed strong objection to the rule of the state to the extent of defying the laws and orders of

---

77 Council Resolution No.1 of 11-8-1947.
78 Memo No. 383. p.1. Imphal, the 22nd August, 1947, Office of His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur.
the state administration. Thus, the movement helped to create a mass consciousness among the people up to a great extent.

The "Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha" was a break through in the process for the establishment of democratic institutions and values in the state. It adopted a resolution relating to the establishment of a full responsible government in Manipur in its Chinga Session in 1938. Consequently, measures for establishment of responsible government in the state started with the initiative of the Maharaja of Manipur.

On the eve of Indian Independence, a strong agitation for the establishment of responsible government in Manipur started. As a response to the demand, the Maharaja took initiative in forming a Constitution Making Committee. The Committee drafted the "Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947" and the "Manipur State Hill People's (Administration) Regulation, 1947." Elections for formation of Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers were held in 1948. Thus, for the first time in Manipur, franchise, though a limited one, was extended to the people of Manipur.

After the establishment of the Council of Ministers in the state, the process of integration and merger of Manipur into the Indian Dominion came up. The Maharaja of Manipur signed the Merger Agreement on 21 September, 1949 and later on, Manipur became a state in Indian Union.

Many regional political parties emerged in the political scene of Manipur expressing the desire of the people for political participation in the democratic set up.