CHAPTER-V
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Empirical Studies of democracy indicate that the strength of
democratic institutions depends on three interrelated phenomenon. First,
there must exist a cadre of political activities who are committed to
democratic principles and complete among themselves for capturing
political power within the confines of democratic rules of the game. Second,
there must be available an institutional structure that facilitates articulation
of divergent public policies and promotes smooth transformation of inputs
into appropriate systematic outputs. And lastly, there must exist a
generalized commitment to democratic values and norms on the part of the
general public. All these three factors are, however, either lacking or too
delicate to survive in intense interplay of clashing interests based on
primordial loyalties and feudal relations prevailing in the context of the
social structure of India, and so also is the state of Manipur.

The most fundamental reality of the Indian Society is the
overwhelming poverty. According to a number of standard works,
measuring on the basis of expenditure required to meet a minimal
subsistence standard of living, nearly 50 per cent of the urban population and
40 percent of the rural people in India lived below the poverty line in 1960-
61.

208 Ramshray Roy: Uncertain Verdict.
Further a vast multitude of Indians are unemployed and underemployed. It has been estimated that in 1972-73, nearly 19.4 million Indians were seeking employment; and that nearly 7.73 per cent of rural population and 8.85 percent of the urban areas were unemployed. In 1978, 22 million Indians were unemployed, 4.4 million of them being chronically deprived of a livelihood. While a good section of the unemployed are in the urban areas, nearly 32 percent of the rural population is unemployed or only partially employed.\textsuperscript{209} In Manipur, only 42.18 per cent are employed and the remaining 57.82 per cent are unemployed both in urban and rural areas.\textsuperscript{210}

In Manipur, both in Hill and valley, there are 2536 villages. Out of this 614 are in the valley and 422 villages are in the Imphal District. (Imphal West, Imphal East – I & II).\textsuperscript{211} It is this majority of population living below, and just above the poverty line which has the major share of votes in the Manipur elections. Poor illiterate, superstitious with a sense of belonging only to the clan group or religion, and with no access to proper communication, except occasionally the government run broadcasting system, this enormous human wave is being driven to polling station, every now and then, to cast the sovereign will.

It is very important to the people of Manipur to insist on knowledge about the politics of the State. It depends on several key social factors like

\textsuperscript{209} Narang, A. S: Indian Government and Politics. P. 363.
education, secular political culture, comparative, prosperity, industrial and technological developments.

Public participation in the sense of direct involvement of public in the making of decisions is but little developed, although examples can be found of limited areas of decision-making being put under the direct control of those affected by the decision, tenants have been given limited responsibilities in estate management or user have been given roles in the running of sports centers.\footnote{Stewart, John: Local Government – The Conditions of Local Choice (1983), p. 131.}

Local authorities have structured public participation in planning through meetings, surveys and other more imaginative approaches determined by the requirements of the planning process. Participation of the public generally remains a relationship with the local authority is initiated by the local authority.

J. L. Woodword and E. Roper have done research in this field (Political Participation) and have fixed following five political activities, the participation which can be called political participation.

i) Voting at the polls,

ii) Supporting possible pressure groups by being a member of them,

iii) Personally communicating directly with legislators,

(iv) Participating in political party activity and thus acquiring a claim on legislatures and
(v) Engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinions through words of mouth that is speaking on and establish communications with other citizens. The people of Manipur especially in Imphal District have to participate the above points on different grounds.

According to the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, in their All India Survey of the 1967 election have distributed the electorate in five broad categories on the basis of their level of involvement in political participation.

1. Apathetic (not involved psychologically in political activities);

2. Peripheral (only vote and have some interest or some information);

3. Spectators (only vote and have some interest and information along with a few who with moderate levels of motivation, vote and engage in other activities);

4. Auxiliaries (There are active participants, those who are engaged in one or other activities with medium levels of interest and information);

5. Politician (this highest level of involvement).

For the political participation of the people of Manipur especially in the Imphal District People should have -

i) voting,

ii) canvassing for candidates.
iii) getting out votes,
iv) organizing meeting and rallies.
v) participation in procession.
vi) distributing pamphlets and campaign and literature,
vii) other types of campaign activities,
viii) campaign through association and group,
ix) attending public meetings and rallies,
x) membership of political parties,
xii) conducting party leaders in solving problems,
xii) conducting government officials in solving problems.

The local authority also has many public relation works because it defines its public by different relationships. The different forms of relationship includes,\(^{213}\)

1. the electoral relationship,
2. tax ratepayer relationship,
3. the client or user relationship,
4. the constraint relationship,
5. the collective relationship,
6. the demand relationship,
7. the participative relationship,
8. the commercial relationship,
9. the working relationship,
10. the media relationship.

\(^{213}\) Ibid. p. 120-121.
These relationships bring strong participation towards social and political activities by the public of local areas.

The local election represents the formal limits to the local electorate’s role.

The local authority has a direct and visible relationship with the public as tax payers.

A local authority and its public take a vast variety of forms – even for a single individual. An individual may live in a council house, use a library, sends his children to school, will certainly use the roads, may use a bus or visit the park. An Individual can be user or client, but so can family, a household, a firm, or a society.

The electoral relationship defines the public of the local authority as the electorate. The electorate is the electorate as prescribed for general elections who are residents in the locality or occupy property in the area.

The formal electoral relationship us contained in the right to vote in local elections.

The local authority has a direct and visible relationship with the public as rate payers. Rates are paid by the householder.

The rating relationship is a taxing relationship, but it differs in important respects from the normal taxing relationship between Central government and taxpayers.

The relationship is between individuals, families, households, or organizations and different parts of the complex organization that makes up
a local authority and makes great participation of the local people towards the political and social sector.

The local authority provides a series of services in its maintenance role, but in its ordering role it constrains licenses, or refuse to show license and for activities, approves proposals for the development and rejects other and inspects property, foods and drugs sold in the public and private places taking action to enforce conformity to specified standards.

The local authority acts or considers it acts on behalf of the community at large.

The concept of the public interest must reflect the values, assumptions and beliefs of the actors involved and will favour the public- according to rules.

The demands to which the local authority is subject can take many forms and be applied at many different points within the authority. Pressure can become strong protest and involve large public.

Local authorities have structured public participation in planning through meetings, surveys and other more imaginative approaches into a timetable determined by the requirement of the planning process.

The commercial relationship is seen most clearly in purchase by the local authority from industry and commerce. The local authority purchases goods towards contracts and uses private professionals as well as its own.
The local authority works with many voluntary organizations providing grants and co-operating in service provision using children home run by voluntary body.

The issues, attitudes and approaches adopted by the media can be an influence on the pattern of activities undertaken by the local authority.

The local authority is in past an open organization. The authority is not equal open to all its public nor does it give equal weight to all demand made. This bias may be a consensus choice. All these points lead to the participation of the local people socially and politically in the public affairs.

5.1. Role of Pressure Groups in Social and Political Participation

Pressure groups play a very important part in the governmental process. They are regarded as indispensable for the successful working and effectiveness of any political system.

A pressure group is a group of people who have shared attributes and interact with each other. They are primarily interest groups and have a potential of playing the role exercising pressure on the political system. Their objective is to realize their aims that arise out of their common interests.

In India the pressure group theory can be applied to some extent as we notice that the society is composed of several interacting groups and that political system represents the plural character of Indian Society. So this theory cannot be applied in the manner as in the U. S.
We have a loose and disorganized multi-party system with major and minor parties with varying length of life and hence we have numerous pressure groups big and small with varying life spans that appear and disappear according to the demand and the circumstances. Further, these pressure groups have shifting affiliations to political parties.

Pressure groups found in the country are mainly of two types:

Special interest organizations representing modern basis of social and economic association such as business groups, labor or trade unions agrarian or peasants groups and students groups.

Organizations representing traditional social relations such as caste, tribe, language and religions groups.  

5.2. Business Groups

These include the federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, All India Manufacturers Organization, Associated Chamber of Commerce and a number of others. The business community is the most important and the best organized pressure groups in the country. Business is heavily concentrated in the hands of a few families like the Dalmias, the Jains, the Birlas, the Tatas, the Goenkas, the Chettiar etc. and these influence the Government policies through huge donations to political parties and election funds.

5.3. Trade Union or Labour

After independence the labour movement got fragmented and the trade union aligned with the country’s major political parties. The Indian

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National Trade Congress (INTC) is affiliated to the former Indian National Congress (INC) is under the control of the communists, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha was organized and protection of their interests like higher wages, improved working conditions, protection from retrenchment, participation of labourers in of labour like bonus payment etc. There were also other professional associations like the layers, teachers, engineers associations etc.

In Manipur also many professional and non-professional associations i.e. lawyers, teachers, engineers, ad-hoc, part-timers, casual, work charge etc and Rickshaw pullers, Drivers and any other associations function for the promotion and protection of their interest like higher wages improved working conditions, protection from retrenchment, participant in management and other well-known economic activities and protection and confirmation of their jobs.

5.4. Role of Women in the Social and Political Participation

In Manipur many dedicated persons were born: Bhagyachandra, Gambhir Singh, Nar Singh, Tikendrajit, Paona, Irabot and many others, their contributions in the social and political development of the state are quite a noteworthy one. Even though women’s role in the social and political arena is also quite a significant one. In fact, in all the social and political upheavals witnessed so far past and present in the state, the women folk came out in the forefront and took the leading role to fight the social and political injustices of the day.

In 1904, the first Nupilal was started against the oppressive rule of the British. In 1939, the Second Nupilal was started to fight against the man
made scarcities of food grains. In these two up heals the women of Manipur wrote their own histories.

And on the 15th of October 1949, the princely State of Manipur became a part of the Indian Union. And for better or worse insurgencies arose both in the hills and valley. The Armed Forces Special Power Act 1958 was enforced in the State and the whole State was declared a disturbed area. And thereof many unwanted incidents happened and such incidents became the order of the day. Besides, certain social evils also caused problems and crisis in the families. And the womenfolk arose to fight all these social evils and political injustice, atrocities and inhuman treatment of the people in the name of containing insurgency.

In 1960-70, Nisha Bandh was formed in every locality against the use of wines, alcohols and other intoxicated drugs etc. as such uses have to problems and crisis in the families.

After 1970, there was a sudden change in Manipur. For better or worse, the State became a hot bed of insurgency. The war declared, a disturbed area and many laws were enforced to contain insurgency in the State. There were encounters between the security forces and undergrounds. The security forces made combing operations and hunted the undergrounds. On the other hand, the undergrounds also took chances and made attacks on the security forces.

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216 Ibid
217 Ibid
Then the people began to suffer untold hardship and sufferings for no fault of their own.

People began to disappear from their homes and were found dead or remained untraceable. Man folk suffered inhuman tortures and women folk suffered rapes and losses of their modesty. And the State Government seems to have become a silent spectator.

On 26\textsuperscript{th} April 1980 at 9 a. m. an underground group killed 3 C. R. P. F. personnel at Patsoi, Imphal West, combing operation followed and 4 innocent persons were killed by the security forces and some were wounded. Again on 27\textsuperscript{th} April 1980, one women vendor was shot death in the Khwairamband Bazar and the Government imposed curfew for 9 days.\textsuperscript{218}

On the withdrawal of curfew, each and every organization together held a meeting in the Pologround. The meeting discussed about crimes, rapes, murder and the inhuman nature of the forces dealing with Insurgency. On 28\textsuperscript{th} May, 1980, women folk formed a coordinating committee and arranged a rally and the Government tried its best to prevent the holding of rally.\textsuperscript{219} The police picked up the women and dropped them at some far off places. And one Sinam Ongbi Pyari Devi suffered death in the said rally. Then the womenfolk held a meeting and formed an Apex Body of the women to fight all the social and political injustice. Nisha Band groups were transformed into Meira Paibies. And the Meira-Paibies in the localities

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., p.13

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
began to keep right-vigil against the unlawful abductions of the people and other form of inhuman treatment of the people.

The Women Apex Body is now observing the 28th of May as “Meira Paibi Numit” and the 29th December as the “Pari Kanba Numit”.

The 20th June, 2001 was the hurtful incident of the people of Manipur in connection with the cease-fire agreement of the Central Government and N.S.C.N.(I.M.) which affected the territory of Manipur, 21 people died in the incident. Meira Paibies of each and every localities sat Dharna and rally to save their territory which should be the Red-lettered day in the history of Manipur.

Besides, these Meira Paibies, there are also many registered N.G.Os., clubs, organizations in the social and political field. Besides these clubs organizations student bodies are also taking a very big role in the social and political field. e.g. A.M.S.U., M.U.S.U., D.E.S.A.M. etc. Besides these there are many parties, student unions, tribal unions participated in social and political field. There also Joint Action Committee formed to fight for specific issues from time to time.

The main aim of democratic decentralisation whether in Manipur or in any other part of the country is to achieve or cherish the level of political development by making election mandatory and preventing the state governments from superseding there Panchayati institutions also form interfering with for indefinite period as had happened for often in the past. If that level of political development is reached, economic development
without disparity among localities is bound to come. State governments are also to devolve powers and responsibilities to the Panchayats according to the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment. Whatever statutory framework, we have to know that the depth of political commitment to democratic decentralisation which determine whether or not Panchayati Raj institutions can become effective levels of governance with enlarged participation we are all aware of the fact that election to the Panchayati institutions make the voters more conscious of their democratic rights. Election gives hopes, political aspirations, expectations etc. Many political programmes are expected during the election time. Meetings, canvassing, interactions between the candidates and the voters and also interactions among the different political groups – all make the people politically conscious of their position in a democratic society. This type of consciousness is definitely a step for political development. It is quite interesting to observe how the political culture of the Imphal people developed because of democratic decentralisation. The role played by the local governmental system instills the edges and norms of democracy into the minds of the people. The questions of equality, fraternity, justice and solidarity are evolved when they are involved much in the process of democratic decentralisation whether it is in the time of elections to the democratic institutions are the trim of functioning of these institutions or at the time of the production of the social output, these questions come up and affect the minds of the people. The attitude, belief, aspiration, expectations – all change and this change is directly related to the process of political development. In other words, democratic decentralisation act as a step for political development. The whole process of
political socialization becomes more and more meaningful because of democratic decentralisation.

Since the essence of Panchayati Raj institutions lies in the idea of local self government, that is, the freedom to decide the course of development on the part of the local people themselves through their local government, our main concern is to strengthen the working of the local government as well as to uphold its quality in the context of democratic norms and ideas. That is, the degree of depth of political will committed by the society to democratic decentralisation will determine whether or not Panchayati Raj Institutions can become effective levels of governance with enlarged participation of the local people and communities.