CHAPTER 6
DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM
IN MANIPUR

The popular movements discussed in the preceding chapter were launched in a general fit of anger and displeasure among the public against the policies of the British authorities. They lacked in organisation and planning. There was no organised group personality bound together under a common leadership and aiming at certain political, economic, social or religious objectives. Therefore, the idea of conscious nationalism did not emerge in Manipur until the birth of the Nikhil Manipuri Hindu Maha-Sabha.

Formation Of The Nikhil Manipuri Hindu Maha-Sabha

The year 1934 may be said to have marked the beginning of nationalist consciousness in the state. In that year the Nikhil Manipuri Hindu Maha-Sabha was formed under the patronage and Chairmanship of Churachand Singh, the Maharaja. In the early stages of its inception, it was purely a religious organisation. It aimed at unification of the Manipuris inside and outside the state based on development of Hinduism in Manipur. Side by side with this, it also aimed at improvement of the social standard, education and culture, economic condition of the people in general, etc.; but it was remarkably devoid of any overt political objective. A cross-section of Manipuris

* Practically the King was regarded as the political and religious head in the state.
from Burma, Cachar, Dacca (now in Bangladesh), Tripura, Assam and Manipur became members of the Nikhil Manipuri Hindu Maha-Sabha. Because the Maha-Sabha did not have any declared political objective, even government employees were allowed to become members of the Maha-Sabha. It was regarded, by then, as a purely social and religious forum.

The Chinga conference of the Nikhil Manipuri Hindu Maha-Sabha in December 1938 was a turning point in its history. The conference resolved to drop the word 'Hindu' and the word 'Manipuri' to be substituted by 'Manipur'. The new name of the organisation was 'Nikhil Manipur Maha-Sabha'. In addition to the resolutions on social and religious reformation, the conference had also adopted political resolutions like full responsible government in Manipur, implementation of adult franchise, amalgamation of the hill administration with that of the valley, etc.

With the above changes in the objectives of the Maha-Sabha, the Maharaja viewed it as a political organisation. He then withdrew from both Chairmanship and membership of the organisation. Orders were issued to the effect that no government servant could be a member of the Maha-Sabha. The inevitable result was that many of the members withdrew their membership of the Maha-Sabha; while many others resigned their services in the government offices, and plunged headlong into the

2. ibid. p.171.
3. ibid.
activities of the Maha-Sabha.** Since then strained relationship developed between the Maharaja and the Maha-Sabha. The Maha-Sabha had played the role of a progressive force against the abuses of the Maharaja and the Brahma-Sabha. It tried to save the Manipuri Hindus from the social and religious persecution of the Maharaja and the Brahma-Sabha. The latter excommunicated people on flimsy grounds declaring them as Amangba (untouchable). All those who co-operated with the Amangba had to face the same fate as the Amangba. The Amangba could be again declared Asengba (opposite of Amangba) on the condition that he should pay some money as fine to the Brahma-Sabha. There were other social evils like the Chandan Sah-khai, Pothang system, etc.

In 1940 at the outbreak of the second Nupi-Lan, the Maha-Sabha was in a dilemma as to whether or not it should join the agitation in support of the women's movement, the second Nupi-Lan. There appeared difference of opinion; the majority opposing the proposal for joining the movement. A faction of the Maha-Sabha under the leadership of Sri Hijam Irabot Singh left the Maha-Sabha and formed the Praja Sammelani. They supplied the leadership of the movement. There were also other small functioning organisations like the Krishak Sabha, Praja Sangha, etc., leading the masses mainly in the villages.

** It is recorded that Sri H. Irabot Singh and Sri E. Thampok Singh resigned government service and joined the Maha-Sabha as active members.
On 4 October 1946 an abortive attempt was made to amalgamate all the organisations and form a larger party. As no unanimous decision could be arrived at, the desired end could not be achieved. However, the joint meeting proved the end of the Maha-Sabha as the remaining members of the Maha-Sabha formed the Manipur State Congress. Sri R.K. Bhubonsana was made the first President and Sri Yumnam Khoimacha Singh the first Secretary of the Manipur State Congress. The formation of the Communist Party in Manipur followed suit in 1948 under the leadership of Sri Irabot Singh; and Sri Takhelambam Bodul Singh was made the first Secretary of the Communist Party.  

In the latter part of the 1940s there was a number of political organisations in the hills of Manipur as well. These were the Tangkhulong, the Kuki National Assembly, the Kawi Association, the Khulmee Union and the Mizo Union.  

Administrative Reforms Vis-a-Vis Constitutional Reforms In Manipur

The formation of the Indian States Committee, popularly known as the Butler Committee, in 1928 marked the progress towards democratisation and establishment of representative governments in the British India and the Indian States. The popular zeal for administrative reforms on the basis of constitutional reforms had spread far and wide. Necessarily divergencies arose among several groups. One group was represented by the rulers and their associates who were ready to

5. Ibid. p. 44.
maintain the status quo; while other groups demanded administrative and constitutional reforms. They wanted to bring the rulers under the control of an established procedure with a view to curbing arbitrary rule.

In Manipur there was no Legislative Council till 1947. The Manipur State Darbar exercised the functions of the Advisory Board in matters of administration and those of the Supreme Court in Judicial matters. The demand for responsible government in Manipur was first voiced at the Chinga Session of the Nikhil Manipur Hindu Maha-Sabha in 1938. Such a demand was felt necessary to attend to the sufferings of the people due to the oppressive measures of the Maharaja and the Brahma-Sabha like, Mangba-Sengba (the problem of untouchables), Chandan-Selkhai (tax on the Manipuri Hindus who used to have Tilak), Wakheisel (practice of giving money openly to the judges by the winner in a case), Dolai-Leng (carriers of the King's palanquin), etc. Moreover, by 1938-39 the Manipuri members of the Darbar were dissatisfied with the fact that the President of the Darbar was a lent British officer who was changed very frequently causing always a discontinuity in the programmes of the state administration. The President was alleged that he worked for the interest of Assam and not for the state of Manipur. The

6. F.D.P., Political A, June 1928, No. 58.
President being a young British officer sent on deputation from the Assam Provincial Service Cadre, was alleged that he had come to the state with a view to earning experience in matters of administration and that he was not more competent than the local talents. Therefore, the preference of a permanent Manipuri President had been stressed in the interest of better service to the state.  

The Maharaja was convinced of the need for administrative reforms. He, however, expressed the view that such a scheme of administrative reforms might be deferred till the inauguration of the proposed Indian Federation. His argument was based on the plea that pending finalisation of the administrative set-up in Manipur, hasty implementation of administrative reforms might require frequent modifications. In the mean time, the Maharaja received a petition signed by 356 persons requesting for the setting up of a Legislative Council and nomination of the Darbar members and other executive officials from amongst the members of the proposed Legislative Council. The demand obviously attracted the attention of the administrators inside and outside the state.

The Darbar members, on invitation of their views on the matter of reforms by the Political Agent, submitted a unanimous proposal consisting of:-(i) Establishment of a State
Legislative Assembly, (ii) unification of the valley and hill administrations, (iii) establishment of a Chief Court separate from the Darbar, (iv) appointment of a permanent President of the Darbar, (v) introduction of British system of administration in toto, (vi) creation of a Manipur Civil Service, (vii) appointment of Sub-Divisional Officers, (viii) improvement of communications, (ix) limiting the Raja's Civil List to 10% of the state revenue, etc. This proposal contained elements of a nationalistic tendency suggesting the manning of the state offices from among the indigenous people.

In 1940 the agitation, a prolongation of the second Hamban with the support of the Praja Sammelani, gave further impetus to the need for reforms. The Governor of Assam, expressing great concern over the unrest in Manipur, invited the Maharaja's attention to it, and stressed that something should be done to allay the grievances of the subjects of the state.

Mr. McDonald, the President of the Darbar, after examining the proposal of the Darbar members, observed that as the State revenue was limited it would not be possible to meet the additional expenditure to be incurred consequent upon the proposed expansion of the establishments including the Legislative Assembly. He further viewed that Manipur had no stock of reliable educated men to fill in the offices as proposed.

11. ibid. p.2.
President did not favour the idea of immediate amalgamation of the hill and the valley administrations. For immediate relief of the peoples' grievances the President suggested:

(i) Disposal of the State properties in British India; (ii) a cut in the Civil List of the Raja and (iii) a cut in the expenditure of the State Military Police; and use the amount thus saved in the public welfare services.  

The above view of the President of the Darbar was much resented by the Manipuri members of the Darbar. They said that the powers conferred upon them by the rules made them competent enough to represent the interests of Manipur State. They also alleged that the state had been converted into a training ground for the young British recruits who were quite incompetent unless they were first trained in states like Manipur.

Mr. C. Gimson, the Political Agent, opined that while he was one with the desire of the people to introduce constitutional reforms, a general improvement in the standard of administration was of immediate importance. In the matter of representative government, he observed that circumstances in Manipur were not ripe for a democratic government. The State lacked in the requisite electorate and sufficient numbers of qualified legislators. However, he suggested that to train

14. ibid. 3 August 1976, loc. cit.
personnel in self-government, local self-governing institutions might be established at the local level.  

It might be mentioned that the formation of the Indian Federation faced problems about inclusion of Indian States in the proposed federation. There was also confusion and resentment in the implementation of the 'Attachment Scheme' which was later on declared invalid by a local court. Under the circumstances, the Political Agent in Manipur, on instruction from the Local Government, insisted on the Maharaja to submit proposal for reforms without waiting for the formation of the proposed federation.

The proposal from the Maharaja covered some elements of constitutional government, though it lacked in details as to better administration. It stressed the prerogatives and discretionary powers of the Maharaja himself. The proposal included the point regarding the establishment of a Legislative Assembly. But, the democratic government proposed was prone to be nearer to a Presidential type than a Parliamentary one. It was envisaged that the Council of Ministers was to be responsible to the Maharaja and not to the Legislative Assembly.

15. ibid. 31 August 1976, op. cit. letter from Gimson to the Maharaja.


The Prime Minister was to be a deputed British officer. The importance and powers of the proposed Assembly were much diminished by the proviso that the Council of Ministers was not to abide by the resolutions of the Assembly over which the Maharaja would have the veto power.

The State Darbar was displeased with the proposal of the Maharaja as it contained nothing about bringing together the hill and the valley administrations under a single political authority. On further correspondence, the Maharaja expressed the view that the Prime Minister designate, a deputed British I.C.S. officer, might continue to administer the hills as was done by the President of the Darbar. On the issue of the method of election, the Maharaja suggested some sort of restricted democracy since he emphasised that qualifications of voters should be prescribed. In view of the extraordinary powers reserved for the Maharaja, the proposal was characterised as nothing but reinforced autocracy.

In spite of all the suggestions from various quarters, a final form of a constitutional government could be effected, except for some administrative changes. Till mid 1947 there was no statutory provision guaranteeing the rule of law and security of persons and property. The close control of the

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19. ibid.

** Voters should pass Lower Primary or equivalent examination.**
Governor of Assam on Manipur administration was the only consolation for protection of certain rights. The undue delay in the establishment of a constitutional government in Manipur was partly due to the declaration of the British Government in 1938 expressing the intention not to pressurise the Native Princes to initiate constitutional changes in their States.

Again, it was also partly due to the demise of Maharaja Churachand Singh during whose time most of the deliberations on the proposed changes took place. In 1941, on the death of Maharaja Churachand Singh, his eldest son, Bodhachandra Singh, became the Maharaja. However, within some months of his assuming the responsibility, Manipur was converted into one of the battle-fields of the second World War. Thus, the matters of introducing constitutional reforms in the state were put in cold storage till the end of the war.

The desire of the people to introduce a constitutional government could not be fulfilled. However, there was some administrative reforms. After considering the proposals, the Governor of Assam, while disfavouring establishment of local self-governing institutions both for Imphal town and the villages, approved of the following changes in 1940:-(i) Creation of a Chief Court as the highest court of appeal; (ii) appointment of a Superintendent of Police from the Assam Police Service; (iii) replacement of the State Military Police

by an armed branch of the Civil Police; (iv) reduction of the Raja's Civil List to 10% of the state revenue; and (v) resurvey and resettlement of the valley. 22

On 4 May 1941 Mr. E.E. Hughes, from the Assam Police Service, joined his service against the newly created post of Superintendent of Police to take over charge for both the Civil and the Military Police. On 31 May 1941 His Highness the Maharaja relinquished the post of being the Commander of the State Military Police which was subsequently disbanded. Mr. Hughes took over charge on 1 June 1941. He was to be responsible to the Maharaja through the President of the Darbar. The Superintendent of Police was instructed to raise and train the police force. The members of the old State Military Police were given the opportunity to get recruited in the new force if they were found suitable and medically qualified. 23

In the matters of land revenue administration two separate offices were created. Over and above the previous strength of the staff new members were taken in. Sri R.K. Setusana Singh, a local man, was appointed Land Revenue Officer; while the Sub-Deputy Collector from Assam was made Land Settlement Officer. The Land Settlement Officer was put in charge of the overall management of the land revenue administration. Additional duties were also attached to the normal duties of the land

23. ibid.
revenue office. They were engaged in completing the census under the Land Settlement Officer. The Kanungos were to act as the Charge Superintendents and the Amins as the Circle Supervisors. 24

The Manipur State Darbar considered taking of Wakheindri as an unfair burden on the people and resolved to abolish it. The Maharaja approved of it under Memo No. 901-P I-I dated 20 February 1940. In the rural areas it was abolished in 1941. Process and Court Fees realisable on petitions filed to the Panchayats were also introduced at the same rates as obtaining at other State Courts. Disputes about Mangba-Sengba (questions about untouchables arising from acts of excommunication by the Brahma-Sabha) were to be under the sole jurisdiction of the Judicial Darbar. It had been declared further that persons connected with declaiming a Manipuri Amangba (untouchable) should be made triable under a charge of defamation.

The distinction between the Ordinary and the Additional members of the Darbar was abolished. All the members of the Darbar, except the President, were to be on the same pay scale, i.e., Rupees 200-10-300 per month. 27

Thus, the peoples' demand for a constitutional government was somewhat appeased with the introduction of some limiting
administrative reforms. The Maharaja still remained as the head of the state, subject to the control of the Local Government of Assam.

Formation Of The Constitution Making Committee

In 1946 the Chamber of Princes expressed its desire to reiterate all efforts towards settlement of Indian constitutional problems. It had emphasised that in the Native States:
(a) No person should be deprived of his liberty; (b) every person should enjoy the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of religion and equality in the eye of law; (c) every person should have the right to the writ of Habeas Corpus; etc. It was further suggested that for ensuring the rights to the people, an impartial judiciary, with provisions for impartial adjudication of disputes between the State and the individual, should be maintained. The Civil List should be clearly demarcated in the budget in a reasonable percentage of the state revenue. The incidence of taxation should be fair and suitable. A substantial portion of the revenue should be allocated for the benefit of the people.

The Government of India, in line with the observations made by the Chamber of Princes, asked the State Residents for a report on developing representative institutions in the Native States. Instructions were also given to see to it that

28. Political Department, File No. 294-P (S)/1946, No. 1.
29. ibid. No. 2.
sufficient provision was made for the rights of the people in consideration of the impending lapse of the British Paramountcy.30

The Governor of Assam, while on tour at Imphal, advised the Maharaja to take the earliest steps for introducing constitutional government in Manipur.31 The Maharaja was constrained to announce the formation of a Constitution Making Committee. It consisted of: (a) Five members to be elected, one each from Imphal West Tahasil, Imphal East Tahasil, Chini-bal Tahasil, Bishenpur Tahasil and Mayang-Imphal Tahasil; (b) five representatives from the hills, one each from Ukhrul, Churachandpur, Tengnoupal and Tamenglong; and (c) five nominees of the Government of Manipur, three members from the State Darbar to be nominated by the President of the Darbar, including the President himself as the Chairman, one member to be nominated by the Chairman of the Chief Court from the Judiciary and one member to be nominated by the Maharaja.

It was stipulated that the proposed constitution should provide for amalgamation of the hills and the valley so as to have a joint administration. The draft constitution should be discussed in a full sitting of the Darbar and sent to the Maharaja with comments. The Maharaja would give its final

30. ibid. No.5.
32. ibid., Order No.30 P dated 12 December 1946 by the Maharaja of Manipur.
form, subject to the approval of the Crown Representative.

Notices were issued inviting nominations from the residents of the valley. But no arrangement for the election was made in the hills as the hill people were not considered suitable for holding of elections.

Objections came from the residents of the valley regarding the composition of the Constitution Making Committee. In view of the ratio of the hill and the valley population, the rationality of constituting the Committee on the basis of equal representation was questioned. They also resented the inclusion of the Official nominees in an equal number in the Committee. The Manipur Praja Sangha, a political party led by Sri Irabot Singh, resolved to boycott the election complaining that the formation of the Committee was unconstitutional. It was alleged that the President of the Darbar had been already appointed Chairman of the proposed Committee by the Maharaja; and the President, being an Englishman, might play a dictatorial role. The Manipur Praja Sangha urged for inclusion of representatives from Jiribam, sufficient provision for minority representation and provision for election in the hills as well.

33. ibid.
34. ibid., letter dated 3 January 1947 from Pearson, President of the Darbar to the Political Agent.
36. ibid.
37. ibid., Telegram No.1 13 dated 17.1,1947 from General Secy, Praja Sangha to the Secy to the Government of Assam.
The residents of the hills also complained against exclusion from the election process. They protested against the deputation of the members from the hills without proper notice to the hill people.38

Notwithstanding all the objections, the election in the valley was held on 20 January 1947. The declaration was made about the formation of the Constitution Making Committee consisting of the following members:

(a) The elected representatives of the valley were: Sri S.Krishnamohan Singh (Imphal West), Sri N.Leiren Singh (Imphal East), Sri H.Dwijamani Deba Sharma (Bishenpur Tahasil), Sri L.Jugeswar Singh (Thoubal Tahasil) and Sri I.Me-raj Singh (Mayang Imphal). (b) The nominated members from the hills were: Mr. A. Daiho, Mr. Tengkham Paite, Mr. Thanglao Kipgen, Mr. Teba Kilong, and Mr. Phanit Phan. *(c) The nominated Official members were: Mr. F.F.Pearson, President of the Darbar, Sri S.Somorenda Singh and Muhammad Wallumda, (all from the State Darbar), Sri L.Ibungohal Singh (from the Judiciary) and Sri A Tombi Singh (Maharaja's nominee).39

Later on Sri S.Bijoy Singh was elected representative from Jiribam; and on the request of the Kabui Nagas, Mr. Chikhong Kabui was taken in as their representative.

38. ibid. Memo No.1448 P II-II dated 24 January 1947 from the Maharaja to the President of the Darbar.
39. ibid. Memo No.9018 dated 20 February 1947 from the President of the Darbar to Private Secy to the Maharaja.
* Representing Mao, Churachandpur, Sadar Hills, Churachandpur and Ukhrul respectively.
The task of the Constitution Making Committee was twofold. It was required to submit drafts on (i) the Interim Manipur State Government and (ii) a stable Government for Manipur. The Maharaja made reservations about the selection of the head of the Government, both in the interim and the future government, and transfer of power to the new government. The head of the government, according to the Maharaja, should be a representative of the ruling family; and the administrative powers should be extended by doses till the representatives of the people were trained in the art of administration. As the views of the Maharaja vitiated the democratic idea, the Congress members of the Constitution Making Committee resented it and insisted on extension of all powers at a time. The Political Agent also advised the Maharaja that considerable powers should be given to the people's government as the sole purpose of the new government and the new constitution was to introduce adequate checks on the arbitrary authority of the ruler.

40. ibid. Memo No.1639 P II-I dated 21 March 1947 from the Maharaja to the Constitution Making Committee.

41. ibid. Maharaja's address to the representatives and the Government dated 10 March 1947.

42. ibid. Letter No 8/57 dated 21 March 1947 from the Political Agent to the Maharaja.

43. ibid. Letter No.8/64 dated 21 March 1947 from the Political Agent to the Maharaja.
The Manipur State
Administration Rules, 1947

There was much delay in the drafting of the constitution; the absence of a consensus on the issues stated before hampered the progress. The Government of Assam took it as delaying tactics on the part of the Maharaja in the hope of restoring his own autocratic rule after the lapse of British Paramountcy. In the meantime, the Maharaja expressed his desire that the head of the Government, Mr. F. F. Pearson, should be replaced by M. K. Priyabarta Singh, Maharaja's own brother. The Government of Assam observed that there was no possibility of framing and introducing a state constitution in line desired by the Maharaja. Therefore, it was considered necessary to prescribe an administrative system designed to check the powers of the Maharaja.

With the above aim in view, Mr. Pearson drafted a rule for administration of the state, and as improved by the Political Agent it provided for:

45. (a) The executive authority of the state was to be exercised by a Council of Ministers consisting of a Chief Minister and six other ministers, of which two to be selected from the hill tribes represented.

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44. ibid. confidential letter No.8/137 dated 16 June 1946 from Political Agent to Mr. Adams, Secy to Govt. of Assam.

the hills. It was stipulated that after Pearson would leave Manipur consequent upon the transfer of power, Sri M.K.Priyabarta Singh might take over as Chief Minister and administer the hills. (b) All orders made or instruments executed should be done in the name of the Maharaja, who would be known as Maharaja in Council. (c) Control of the Judiciary should be vested in a Chief Court which would function under an Act to be known as Manipur State Courts' Act, 1947. (d) Cheques on the Treasury or banks should be signed by the Chief Minister. (e) The Council should have joint responsibility for all their acts. (f) Prior approval of the Maharaja was to be obtained on important issues like, agreements with neighbouring states, matters relating to the administration, sanction of annual budget of the State and new legislation and rules having the force of law.

In addition to Mr. Pearson, five members were proposed for inclusion in the new Council. They were: Sri M.K. Priyabarta, Sri S.Somorendra Singh, Sri Waikhom Chaoba Singh, Muhammad Quazi Wali Ulla and Mr. A. Daiho. The remaining member was to be taken in after Mr. Pearson would leave.

The Government of Assam approved the Rules proposed along with the names suggested. The Rules were to be effective from 1 July 1947. However, Mr. Pearson was to stay on as Chief Minister till 14 August 1947, the eve of the transfer of power.

Further inclusion of hill representatives was deferred till suitable and commonly acceptable members were available. The Maharaja ordered implementation of the Rules. Side by side, a set of rules like, the Manipur State Hill Peoples' (Administration) Regulation, 1947; the Manipur State Courts' Act, 1947 and the Manipur State Appointment Board's Rules, 1947 were also framed. These were made effective from 10 August, 1947.

The new Administration Rule did not mention anything about the control of the Political Agent or the Local Government of Assam over the administration of Manipur State. However, such control was still exercised through agreements between the Governor of Assam and the Maharaja. There was also the set of Confidential Instructions issued by the Governor of Assam to the Maharaja of Manipur on which a discussion follows.

For the first time the new Administration Rule introduced a sort of responsible government in the state. The amalgamation of the hill and the valley administrations was a sop to the people. However, the reservation for the head of the government for a representative of the ruling family had

47. ibid. Order No.36 P dated 28 June 1947 by the Maharaja; also Resistance, 12 April 1977 Colonial History of Manipur-65, Order No.36 dated 28 June 1947, loc.cit.
emasculated the idea of a full-fledged responsible government.

**Confidential Instructions**

The Government of Assam suspected the attitude of the Maharaja insofar as it concerned the future relation of the state with the Government of India after the transfer of power. The Maharaja had expressed the view that full sovereignty would return to the State with the termination of the British Paramountcy.\(^{50}\) Such a view was shared by the Manipur State Congress when it observed that arrangements should be made to hand over the sovereignty of the state to its people.\(^{51}\)

It might be noted, however, that the interpretation of restoration of sovereignty to the state, mentioned above, was not similar. The Maharaja conceived of full political sovereignty of Manipur though he desired continuation of the responsibility of defence of the State to be discharged by the successor Government of India, as had been carried out by the Crown Representative. The Congress Party of Manipur urged for establishment of peoples' responsible government in the State, while they pleaded that Manipur should join the Constituent Assembly and become a part of the Indian Union.

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50. M.S.L. Cabin 29, File No.8, op. cit. Memo No.2225-P II-I dated 14 May 1947 from the Maharaja to the Political Agent.

The Political Agent tried to induce the Government of Assam to take a definite stand on the issues relating the future relations between Manipur State and the Government of India. He suggested either retention of the full control both in the hills and the valley administrations of the state or complete withdrawal of control inclusive of the troops and the Political Agency.  

To clarify confusions the Government of Assam issued the Confidential Instructions providing for the following:—

(i) The introduction of the new rules should not alter the earlier relations between the tribes and the Darbar (newly named State Council); and the rule for hill administration should continue till a new State Constitution was framed and introduced. (ii) All powers of the Maharaja should be interpreted as subject to approval of H.E. the Crown Representative in Assam. (iii) The appointment of the Chief Minister and the Chief Judge of the Chief Court in Manipur should be made by the Maharaja on the advice of the Crown Representative. (iv) The State budget should be forwarded to H.E. the Crown Representative for approval. (v) In the event of a disagreement between the Maharaja and the Council, a reference should be made by the Chief Minister to the Political Agent for a decision in accordance with instructions from the Crown Representative.  

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52. ibid. Letter No.8/140 dated 18.4.1947 from the Political Agent to Mr. Adams, Secy to the Government of Assam.
The Confidential Instructions, therefore, had filled the gaps in the Administration Rules, 1947. It had reiterated that the former relations between the Government of Manipur and the Government of India would continue even after the lapse of British Paramountcy in India.

Interim Government in Manipur

The British Labour Party Government had contemplated that Paramountcy would lapse from 15 August 1947. With the formation of an Interim Government at Delhi in September 1946, the demand for a responsible government in Manipur also came up. It was decided that after the lapse of Paramountcy and the transfer of power, the State of Manipur would not get any assistance or protection from the Government of India as was the case with all the Native States in India. In the meantime, pending the introduction of the new Constitution, an Interim Council with representatives from the hills and the valley was considered necessary.

The Manipur State Congress claimed the privilege of forming the Interim Council as it had 84% of the elected members in the Constitution Making Committee. The Praja

55. Political Department, File No.16(15)-P/1947, No.2.
57. ibid. Memorandum dated 14 July 1947 from Krishnamohan Singh, General Secy, Manipur State Congress, to the Political Agent.
Sangha, on the other hand, demanded that all the members of the Interim Government should be chosen by the people of the state through an election under universal adult franchise. 58

With the enforcement of the Manipur Administration Rules, 1947 from 1 July 1947, a Council of Ministers was established. But the people were not satisfied with the arrangement, the reason being that there was no popular representative in the new Council. It was merely a new name for the State Darbar. 59

It was difficult to have a commonly acceptable list of members in the new Interim Council of Manipur. The political parties also disagreed as to whether the members for the valley should be elected or not. The Governor of Assam and the Political Agent were of the opinion that only two members out of the four should be elected; the political parties insisted on election of all the members. Ultimately an agreement was reached between Mr. Pearson, the Chief Minister, and the State Congress Party to the effect that there should be two officials and two non-officials as Ministers in the Interim Council representing the valley. Thus, the question of election of representatives was dropped. The Maharaja was keen to have his nominees in the Interim Council; the Political parties objected to this.

60. M.S.L. Cabin 29, File No.5, op. cit. Letter No.5/85 dated 7 July 1947 from the Political Agent to the Maharaja.
Mr. Pearson ultimately proposed the following names of members to be included in constituting the Interim Council of Manipur:

(1) Sri M.K. Priyabarta Singh, (2) Sri K. Gouro Singh, (3) Sri S. Krishnamohan Singh, (4) Sri R.K. Bhubonsana and (5) Muhammad Basiruddin Ahmed. Two hill members were to be nominated afterwards.

While suggesting these names of members, Mr. Pearson also threatened that he would report to the Governor of Assam that the Maharaja was not willing to abide by the Administration Rules in case he failed to issue necessary orders forming the Interim Government of Manipur. Thereupon the Maharaja issued orders forming the Interim Council with the members listed above. The new appointees in the Interim Council were to take charge from 8 a.m. of 14 August 1947 until the new constitution of the state was introduced and a new government was formed accordingly.

The last proposal did not include Mr. Pearson's name because the first day of the new Ministry's taking over charge happened to be the last day for Mr. Pearson in office in the state. At the initial stages the hill seats remained vacant. Later on Mr. Teba Kilong and Major R. Khathing were inducted.

61. ibid, Memo No. 1348 C dated 12.8.1947 from Pearson to the Maharaja.
as Ministers representing the hills. Thus, the Interim Council came to consist of one Chief Minister (a member of the royal family), two officials, two non-officials and two members from the hills.

The Congress Party split on the issue of election of representatives from the valley. One faction of the party was known as Tomal Congress, after the name of its President, Sri Tomal Singh; the other, the Tompok Congress, after the name of its President, Sri E.Tompok Singh. Of the two, the Government of Manipur recognised the Tomal Congress as the real Congress Party in Manipur. 63

Formation Of Popular Government

The Interim Government was a stopgap arrangement. The actual demand of the people was to establish an elected government. The question about an elected Council, at least for the valley, was taken up at the time of forming the Interim Council. However, the idea was temporarily dropped as the Governor of Assam did not consider an election feasible at that time at Manipur.

The Maharaja received the draft Constitution of the state on 26 September 1947. The draft constitution provided for universal adult franchise. The Maharaja insisted on a qualified franchise and safeguards for the people by restricting

representation of a constituency to the residents of the constituency only. 64

In the meantime general pressures were brought to bear upon the Maharaja for early implementation of the State Constitution. The Tompok faction of the State Congress Party served an ultimatum threatening to launch a Satyagraha movement from 19 September 1947 if the Maharaja failed to announce implementation of the State Constitution within six months. The Manipur State Krishak Sabha demanded composition of an elected Legislative Assembly and also election of ministers from amongst the members of the Assembly. 65 The Tomal faction of the Congress Party pressed the Maharaja to introduce the State Constitution within eight months since the formation of the Interim Council. A reminder also was sent stating that if the demand was not conceded, they would take independent steps for early introduction of responsible government in Manipur. 66 The State Socialist Party was also planning to commence non-co-operation and civil disobedience movement on the same issue. 67

64. ibid. 31 January 1978, Colonial History of Manipur-107, Maharaja’s memo No.2580 P I-I dated 20.2.1948 to the State Council.
67. ibid. Resolution No.5 of the meeting dated 9.10.1947.
68. ibid. 27 September 1977, Colo.Hist.-89, Memo No.2366 (C) dated 27.9.1947 from Chief Minister to the Maharaja.
Thus, public opinion was clearly in favour of an elected responsible government. The Maharaja issued a declaration stating that the State Constitution would be made operative within April 1948. The Franchise Committee of the Constitution Making Committee was asked to finish preparation of the Franchise Rules and the electoral roll of the voters for holding the election. Captain M.K. Priyabarta Singh, the Chief Minister, made an announcement to the effect that the State Council planned to introduce the Constitution by April 1948.

The Maharaja introduced the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 in February 1948. Election of members to the State Legislative Assembly was held during the period from 11 June 1948 to 27 July 1948 for which Sri P.C. Deb was appointed the Returning Officer. The State Assembly of 53 members held its first meeting on 18 October 1948 at the Palace Darbar Hall.

Mr. T.C. Tengkham and Sri T. Bokul Singh were elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively. They assumed charge of office on 22 November 1948. The following members were appointed Ministers in the new government:

(1) Captain M.K. Priyabarta Singh, (nominated by the Maharaja) Chief Minister, in charge of Home and Revenue; (2) Sri Ibungo-

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69. ibid. 18 October 1977, Colo. Hist.-92, Order No. 64 P dated 18 October 1947 by the Maharaja.

70. ibid. 20 December 1977, Colo. Hist.-101, Announcement dated 23 November 1947 by the Chief Minister.


72. ibid. 21 November 1978, Colo. Hist.-147, Order No. 44 dated 20 November 1948 by the Maharaja.
tomcha Singh, in charge of Finance, Local Self Government, Water-Tax and Vehicle-Tax; (3) Dr. N. Leiren Singh, in charge of Education, Press and Public Works Department; (4) Sri A. Gourabidhu Singh, in charge of Commerce and Industry; (5) Muhammad Alimuddin, in charge of Jail, Medical and Public Health; (6) Major R. Khathing, in charge of Hill Affairs; and (7) Mr. Teba Kilong, in charge of Forest, Agriculture and Veterinary. 73

The Ministers were administered oaths of office and secrecy on 26 November 1948; and they were take over charge of their respective departments from 29 November 1948. 74

There were complaints against the appointment of Captain M.K.Priyabarta Singh as the Chief Minister on the ground that he was not an elected member of the Assembly. However, the complaint failed to receive sufficient support from the members of the Assembly. As stated already, it was the fixed desire of the Maharaja that the Chief Minister should be one from amongst the members of the ruling family. This was honoured by a majority of the members. Because of his experience and popularity, Captain M.K.Priyabarta Singh was accepted as Chief Minister of the new Government under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 as an exception. The new government continued in office till the abolition of the State Council on 15 October 1949 consequent upon the taking over

74. ibid.
of the State administration by the Government of India under the Merger Agreement of 21 September 1949 between the Maharaja and the Governor of Assam, on behalf of the Government of India.

**Manipur Joins Indian Union**

The passing of the Government of India Act, 1935 contemplated establishment of a federation to be composed of the British Indian Provinces and the Native Indian States. The joining of the proposed federation by the Native States was voluntary; while it was compulsory for the British Indian Provinces. A scheme, known as the Attachment Scheme, was introduced in 1943 wherein the small and economically non-viable states were urged to join the larger states; or a number of smaller states should join together to form viable units. In the case of Manipur, there was opinion for attaching it with Assam, which the people of Manipur objected. Even there was a plan to form a Wazeristan consisting of Manipur, Cachar, Tripura and the Lushai Hills. The people of Manipur, however, refused to accept any plan for merging Manipur with others. They preferred to stay by themselves in view of their separate culture, habits and identity.

77. Ministry of States, File No. 15(12)-P/1949, Note by Amar Singh, Dewan of Manipur, *(n.d.).*
On the eve of the transfer of power two conflicting views, interpreting the position of the Native States after the lapse of the British Paramountcy, were put forth. M.A. Jinna, the leader of the Muslim League, contended that on the lapse of Paramountcy the Indian States would become free and independent states; they could choose the course they would like to adopt. They could join either the Indian Dominion or the Dominion of Pakistan; or remain even separate. 79 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a leader of the Congress Party, contended, on the other hand, that the Indian States could not be regarded as independent states after the lapse of Paramountcy in view of their geographical contiguity with the Indian territories and also from the point of Indian security. The stand of His Majesty's Government was that with the lapse of Paramountcy the British control over the Indian States would cease to operate. All sovereignty and powers surrendered by the States to the Paramount power would return to the States. The future relations of the States with the successor Government of India should be settled by political arrangements arrived at through negotiations between the States and the successor government in India. 81

It was a distant possibility that Manipur should join the Dominion of Pakistan because of her geographical position,

80. ibid. p. 889.
being surrounded by the former British Indian Provinces. Further, the leaders in the Interim Government of India like, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel expressed their steadfast stand that no Native State could join Pakistan unless the state was contiguous to it and her people were willing to join Pakistan. Thus, if at all Manipur should join the proposed federation, she would have to join the Dominion of India.

The execution of the Instrument of Accession and signing of the Stand Still Agreement were obligatory for joining a Dominion. Maharaja Churachand Singh of Manipur received the circular for executing the Instrument of Accession and signing of the Stand Still Agreement as early as 1936 through the Political Agent. The Maharaja, however, did not readily sign them. He urged a separate seat for Manipur in the Constituent Assembly of India in view of her separate status. He also expressed the view that he did not intend to join the federation if there be any probability of losing the status and lowering down of the dignity of the State authority as a result of joining the federation. The Manipur Darbar had also advised the Maharaja that it would be desirable to watch the steps of the Chamber of Princes.

84. ibid., letter No.1728 G/IA dated 21 November 1936 from the President of the Darbar to the Maharaja.
Since the outbreak of the second World War in September 1939, the question about the formation of the federation was kept in abeyance because of the heavy British engagement in the war. The situation was all the more worse for Manipur owing to the Japanese bombardment of the State in May 1947. There was almost a dislocation of the Government and the State administration because of the war conditions. However, the subject of forming the federation was reopened in 1946 after the end of the war.

In December 1946 the Government of Assam informed the Maharaja that Manipur could not claim a separate representation in the Indian Constituent Assembly as the basis of representation was one member for every ten lakhs of population; while the population of Manipur numbered less than ten lakhs. The Governor of Assam suggested that Manipur should join the Constituent Assembly by allowing Mr. G.S. Guha, the representative of Tripura and the Khasi States, to represent Manipur also. Advisors to Mr. Guha could be appointed who would represent the interests of both the hills and the valley. The Maharaja was further cautioned that unless the opportunity was availed of in time, Manipur would not get the chance of being represented in the Constituent Assembly; and it might result in regrettable consequences.

Mr. Guha intimated to the Maharaja of his willingness to represent Manipur State in the Constituent Assembly. But, the matter could not be settled easily. The Maharaja also took the position of watchful waiting.

Till May 1947, the issue regarding Manipur’s joining the Indian federation could not take any shape as the final position about the relation of the states with the successor government of India was still hanging in the balance and negotiations were continuing. The Maharaja, having been elated by the idea of lapse of Paramountcy and return of the sovereignty to Manipur State itself, was trying to take out the best possible advantages from the Government of India. He was, however, aware that Manipur being on the border of India with limited resources, it would be difficult to face foreign aggression. It was, therefore, proposed that the Government of India should accept the responsibilities hitherto undertaken by the Crown and continue to maintain in Manipur the 4 Assam Rifles or a body of regular troops controlled by the Government of India. The Manipur State Darbar also observed that it would be improbable for Manipur to maintain a status of aloofness by declaring independence. They expressed their wish that Manipur should join the federation. Steps were

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86. ibid. Letter No. 223/CT dated 26 November 1946 from Guha to the Private Secy to the Maharaja.
88. ibid. Letter dated 29 June 1947 from M.K. Priyabarta Singh to the Political Agent.
taken up to allow Mr. Guha to represent Manipur State in the Constituent Assembly of India, who would be aided by an Advisor representing both the hills and the valley.

The Manipur State Darbar advised the Maharaja to announce that Manipur had joined the Constituent Assembly. It further recommended approval to the appointment of Mr. Guha as the representative of Manipur in the Constituent Assembly with Captain M.K. Priyabarta Singh as the Advisor. The Manipur State Council (new name of the Darbar since 1 July 1947) accepted the terms of the Instrument of Accession and the Stand Still Agreement on 11 August 1947.

The Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession on 11 August 1947. The Maharaja also approved on 22 August 1947 the Manipur State Council Resolution dated 11 August 1947 regarding the appointment of Mr. Guha as the representative of Manipur in the Constituent Assembly of India. Thus Manipur became an integral part of India.

The following facts might be taken into consideration in support of the above-stated argument:-

(i) In a letter addressed to the Maharaja, Sri S. Somoren-dra Singh, an ex-member of the State Council, had stated that he could hardly believe that the Maharaja who had joined the

federation of India would act in that way** being the Mahara- 

raja himself an Indian.92 (ii) In a memorandum Sri S. Somor-
rendra Singh, Organizer of the State Congress (Tompok fac-
tion) Satyagraha, wrote that they would start the Satya-
graha if the anomalous restrictions on free movement of an 
Indian citizen in Manipur, which is also a part of India, 
were not removed.93 (iii) In an announcement made by Captain 
M.K.Priyabarta Singh, Chief Minister, it had been stated that 
 Manipur had acceded to the Dominion of India.94 (iv) The Mahara-
aja of Manipur in a proclamation dated 18 October 1948 had 
declared that India came out to be stronger than before; and 
 Manipur too, as a component part, was the same with the remo-
val of the bar between the hills and the valley.95

The Merger Agreement Of 1949

Even after Manipur became a part of the Dominion of India 
from 1947, it was contended that the signing of the Instrument 
of Accession did not amount to Merger of the State in the 
Indian federation. The Maharaja of Manipur argued that in the 
Instrument of Accession only three subjects : Defence, External-

** Indian National Flag not allowing inside palace gate.
92. Resistance 7 June 1977, Colo.Hist.-73, letter from S. Somor-
rendra Singh to the Maharaja.
93. ibid, 20 September 1977, Colo.Hist.-88, Memo No.8/S.C. 
dated 18.9.1947 from Somorendra to the Maharaja.
95. Resistance, 26 September 1978, Colo.Hist-139, (English 
version of the proclamation by the Maharaja.)
Affairs and Communication had been surrendered; and in the Stand Still Agreement only 15 ancilliary subjects like, Customs, Excise, Currency, etc., had been ceded with the consent of the Government of Manipur. In the remaining matters the Government of Manipur had the full right and authority to conduct the administration of the State in their free will. However, for a State like Manipur, which had signed the Instrument of Accession and the Stand Still Agreement, and also, which had sent representative to the Indian Constituent Assembly, there could not be any doubt that it had joined the Dominion of India. But the matter still remained confused. It might be noted that in a number of cases involving the Native States, Courts in India had upheld that the Native States after the lapse of Paramountcy were independent states under Section 7 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947. The Maharaja of Manipur was not free from the influences of such decisions of the Courts as regards the independent status of the State, in spite of his earlier commitments.

The Merger Agreement signed between the Maharaja and the Governor of Assam on 21 September 1949 was a double-edged sword to remove all doubts about the political position of Manipur in relation to the Government of India. Not only it had confirmed that Manipur was an integral part of India,

but also it had transferred the responsibility of state administration to the Central Government of India with effect from 15 October 1949. The salient points in the agreement were:

(a) The Maharaja agreed to transfer the state administration to the Government of India from 15 October 1949.
(b) The Maharaja should continue to enjoy the personal rights and privileges and other ritual rights.
(c) The Government of India would give to the Maharaja for his privy purse a sum of 3 lakhs of rupees per annum from 15 October 1949.
(d) The Dominion Government guaranteed the succession to the throne according to the law and customs of the State.
(e) No enquiry should be made by the authority of the Government of India against the Maharaja.
(f) The Government of India guaranteed security of the services of the State Government employees and also employment of Manipuris in the various branches of State administration.
(g) No state servant should be prosecuted for their past acts in their official capacity.

The new Constitution of India did not give any provision for allowing the state administrative machinery to function in a centrally administered state. Every aspect of state administration had to function under an Agent of the Central Government of India called the Chief Commissioner. Therefore, the former State Legislative Assembly and the State Council

of Ministers formed under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 were abolished. A Chief Commissioner was made in charge of the state administration. The circumstances leading to such transfer would be discussed in the subsequent paras.

It should be mentioned that the Merger Agreement of 1949 had been wrongly interpreted to be the date on which Manipur joined the Indian Union. Manipur became a part of India, as stated above, in 1947. The merger, therefore, should not be construed to mean that it was a merger of the State of Manipur in India. It simply meant the transfer of the State administration to the Central Government administration; a mere transfer of administrative authority; not the sovereign political authority as such.

**Manipur Becomes a Chief Commissioner's Province**

A popular responsible government under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 was established in 1948. But, shortly after, there arose conflicts between the Maharaja and the State Congress Party, the then opposition party in the State Legislature, on an election issue. The problem aggravated. The intervention by the Maharaja in the election case of Muhammad Alimuddin, a member from Lilong Constituency and a Minister, who had been unseated by a verdict of the Election Tribunal, was considered unjustified and unconstitutional. The act of rehabilitation of Md. Alimuddin as a result of status quo ante, as ordered by the Maharaja, was challenged by the Congress party.
The Chief Judge of the Chief Court, Manipur, also viewed that Maharaja's intervention in an election case against the decision of the Election Tribunal was unconstitutional and in contravention of the Manipur State Courts' Act, 1947.

The Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution to take resort to direct action unless it was declared that the Maharaja would not interfere in the election cases and that Alimuddin was unseated. The Working Committee directed the members of the Congress Legislature Party to boycott the Assembly sittings. In a series of Congress meetings in the town and the rural areas, resolutions were adopted demanding immediate removal of the Maharaja from the Gaddi, dissolution of the Government (coalition government headed by the Praja Shanti party) and immediate integration of the Manipur administration with the Centre and turning it into a centrally administered autonomous unit till the Constitution of India was enforced. A memorandum was sent to Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Of States, alleging that the Maharaja was not acting constitutionally; the Maharaja had nursed an anti-Indian attitude trying to preserve the sovereignty of the State; and that the 'divide and rule' policy of the Maharaja was dangerous to integration.

In support of their plea for Central Rule in Manipur, the Congress Party gave three reasons: First, Manipur was the eastern gateway to India. The Communists in Burma might have a link with the Communists in India through Manipur. Hence, to check it, strong rule by the Government of India was necessary. Secondly, savings from the abolition of the Gaddi and the help from the Centre would increase the State resources for development schemes in Manipur. Lastly, because Manipur had a separate culture, language and identity, to ensure a separate entity, it would be better to remain as a centrally administered area with sufficient autonomy.  

As a modus operandi of the proposed administration, the Congress suggested two measures: For the interim period, the Dewan of Manipur** should immediately take over the State administration, thereby abolishing the Gaddi, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly. As a permanent measure, after the Indian Constitution came into force, there should be a unicameral State Legislature, elected on adult franchise, established with a Council of Ministers which would be responsible to the Legislature. To function as the executive head, a Chief Commissioner or a Lieutenant Governor should be appointed for the State of Manipur.  

101. ibid.  
102. ibid.  

** The post of Dewan was an imposition by the Government of India, not a post under the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947.
In view of the proposition made by the State Congress, it would be worthwhile to ascertain the administrative position of the Dewan of Manipur. After the transfer of power on 15 August 1947, the role of the Political Agent in Manipur was taken over by the Dominion Agent. As the post of Dominion Agent was also abolished in 1948, there was no official in Manipur to represent the Government of India. The works were carried out by the Governor of Assam and his staff.\textsuperscript{103}

The Government of India, desirous of keeping a representative at Imphal, pursuaded the Maharaja to appoint a Dewan, taking advantage of the agreement between the Maharaja and the Governor of Assam dated 2 July 1947. The Maharaja objected to the constitutionality of the appointment of a Dewan. He said that he could not appoint the Dewan without consulting the Council. But, the Maharaja was outwitted as the Maharaja was assured protection by the Government of India in the event of any unhappy repurcussions.\textsuperscript{104} The Maharaja thus accepted the proposal. At first, Captain M.K.Priyabarta Singh, the Chief Minister, was appointed Dewan. Afterwards Major General Rawal Amar Singh took over charge as the Dewan of Manipur on 18 April 1949.

The Manipur State Constitution, 1947 did not mention anything about the post of a Dewan over and above the Chief

\textsuperscript{103} Ministry Of States, File No.12(100)-P/1948; Answer to the question by Choudhury on 13.8.1948 in the Constituent Assembly of India.

Minister of the State. Thus, the Dewan in the Manipur administration was a square peg in a round hole. The Government of India, notwithstanding all those, decided that the post of Dewan should continue on the basis of implied suspension of the State Constitution until it was challenged.\textsuperscript{105} The Dewan was further informed that he had all the necessary powers; and he was actually the real head of the Manipur State administration.\textsuperscript{106}

Major General Rawal Amar Singh, the Dewan, was encouraged by the Government of India's support. He instructed the Maharaja and the Speaker of the Assembly that Alimuddin should be unseated as per the decision of the Election Tribunal. He also held that the interference by the Maharaja in the election case was uncalled for.\textsuperscript{107}

The Dewan, in support of the allegations against the Maharaja, reported that the Maharaja was indulging in subversive activities in collusion with anti-social elements. He recommended taking over of the State administration by the Central Government of India.\textsuperscript{108} There were, however, forces counteracting the move for the take over like the Praja Shanti, the Krishak Sabha, etc.


\textsuperscript{106} ibid, No.35.

\textsuperscript{107} ibid. File No.15(14)-P/1949 op.cit. Telegram dated 21 June 1949 from Amar Singh to the Ministry of States.

The Ministry of States, Government of India, had been collecting secret information through the Intelligence Bureau posted at Manipur from 1947. The suspicious situation in Manipur had been receiving the attention of the Government of India. The matters about the subversive activities in the State were discussed as early as 7 March 1947 by a Committee specially set up by the Defence Ministry. The Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Mr. Mullick, was sent to Manipur on the instruction of the Defence Minister to report on the situation.

It was reported in 1947 that Mr. Aliba Imti, the President of the Naga National Council, was urging the Government of India for recognition of Naga independence. He called upon the Naga sepoys, policemen, students and workers to be prepared for any eventuality. Information was also received to the effect that the Communist Party was spearheading the movement against integration of Manipur in the Central administration. It was alleged that the Maharaja made the propaganda among the subjects to stop payment of revenue if the State was integrated. The report further stated that the Communists would declare the Communist strongholds like, Sekta, Pungdongbam, Nambol, Utlou, etc., as the 'Red Areas' and start guerrilla warfare. Reports were also poured in

saying that in the 7th annual meeting of the Manipur State Students' Federation on 8 July 1949 a red bordered flag was hoisted inscribed therein "Freedom, Peace and Progress".  

Mr. Palit, the Superintendent of Police in Manipur, reported that a meeting of the Praja Shanti Party held on 12 September 1949 resolved to maintain the Gaddi and also separate existence of the State.  

The Khul Union under Raja Ramjang of Tiddim had declared that in the event of Manipur becoming a Centrally administered area, they would launch a movement for the merger of Khul administration in Manipur with Burma. Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam, wrote to Sardar Patel saying that it was dangerous to maintain a weak state near the border to allow it to act independently.  

The above stated information was sufficiently strong to change the mind of the Government of India which previously thought that the taking over of the Manipur administration by the Centre would create awkward problems as Manipur was far away from Delhi.  

114. ibid. No.14 A.  
circumstances, decided that taking over of the State administration would be the most effective and practicable arrangement to keep the situation under control. The Government of Assam, under instructions from the Government of India, drafted the Merger Agreement which mainly provided for handing over of the Manipur administration to the Central Government of India with effect from 15 October 1949.

The Governor of Assam called the Maharaja to Shillong; and asked him to sign the agreement. At first the Maharaja was reluctant to sign. But, there were threats about deposition of the Maharaja and selecting of a successor by the Government of India if he refused to sign the document.\textsuperscript{117} It had also been hinted that the state administration might be taken over by force of arms. The Sub-Area Commander at Shillong had been instructed to be prepared for any eventuality in Manipur.\textsuperscript{118} The Maharaja, under threats and persuasion, signed the agreement on 21 September 1949.\textsuperscript{119}

As a sequel to the signing of the historic document between the Maharaja and the Governor of Assam (representing the Government of India), a notification was issued by the Government of India to put the agreement into effect. The Manipur administration was taken over by the Centre and it was placed

\textsuperscript{117} Ministry Of States, File No.15(37)-P/1949, op.cit. Note by V.P.Menon, Secy to the Govt. of India dated 19.9.1949.
\textsuperscript{118} ibid. No.2.
\textsuperscript{119} ibid. No.5.
under a Chief Commissioner. The State Council and the Legislative Assembly were dissolved from the date of transfer of the State administration. Major General Rawal Amar Singh, the Dewan of Manipur, was appointed the first Chief Commissioner of Manipur State.

The aspirations of the State Congress to have a State Legislature even after the merger proved to be a day-dream. Agitations for retention of the responsible government and the popular assembly were of no avail. An Advisory Council, without any executive authority, was granted as a consolation. The Government of Assam played the previous role as usual on all important issues concerning Manipur State. Even after taking over of the State administration by the Centre, only the financial and administrative sanctions were given by the Central Government. The Chief Commissioner of Manipur was instructed to obtain prior approval of the Government of Assam on all important matters of State administration. Thus, though the transfer was not effected through a smooth and happy process, the Government of India continued to conduct the State administration till Manipur was granted Statehood in 1971.

120. ibid. No.18, Notification No.219 P dated 15.10.1949.
121. ibid, File No.F 2(19)-S/1949, No.3.
122. ibid. File No.15(44)-P/1949, No.1, letter dated 24.10.1949 from A.B.Chatterjee to Amar Singh, the Chief Commissioner of Manipur.
An assessment of the British rule from 1891 to 1947 in Manipur might be made. On the whole, the people of Manipur had benefited much during the days of British administration. Some such advantages could now be discussed.

The frequent feuds and revolts among the princes of the State, not for the welfare of the people, but for their lust for power and the throne, were brought to an end. The traditional system of a barter economy was replaced by a monetary economy. The people of the state had achieved a satisfactory standard of education which would not have been possible had the traditional system prevailed. In the sphere of trade and communication, Manipur had been linked up with other parts of India and Burma at high costs borne by the Government of India. Telegraph links were installed for easy and quick communication. The essentials of a better life like, medical facilities, supply of pure drinking water, electricity, etc., were made available to the people. The system of land holding had been revised to promote increased revenue and clear ownership. Quarrels about land holdings had been minimised by adopting codified rules and by appointing qualified officers to settle the disputes. The barbaric ways of life in the hills underwent complete change in the direction of civilization and progress. Educated youths had been trained irrespective of caste, religion and culture, enabling them to share in the administration of the state. It was a colonial rule, yet certain objectively beneficial measures came to be introduced in the state.