CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF INTEGRATION IN RETROSPECT

The foundation of the transfer of power in India was laid down by the Cabinet Mission's Plan of May 16, 1946 in view of the British worldwide financial and military commitment.

Accordingly, a Constituent Assembly was set up to frame a constitution for India. The Constituent Assembly set up an Advisory Committee which set up three sub-committees to report and recommend on (1) the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded and Partially-Excluded Areas, (2) the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas in the Provinces other than Assam, (3) the Tribal Areas in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. The sub-Committee on Assam Tribal-Excluded Areas was headed by Gopinath Bardoloi. The other members were Rev. J. J. M. Nicholas Roy, the Khadi leader, minister of Assam and a member of the Constituent Assembly, Rupnath Brahma, a plains tribal leader and Alika Imai Ao, Secretary of the Naga National Council, as a hill leader of Assam and

1 Constituent Assembly Debates Vol. II, No. 4, Delhi, 1946-47, pp. 308-11.
A.V. Thakkar, a social worker among central Indian tribes and Chairman of the Second sub-Committee. They toured all hill districts of Assam except the Garo Hills, where communication difficulties deterred them. It was assisted by R.N. Rau, the Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly, who had served Assam as a civilian earlier. The sub-Committee co-opted two members from tribes of each district visited except the Frontier Tracts and the Tribal Area. The Report of the sub-Committee was submitted on July 28, 1947.

The Indian Independence Act of 1947 terminated paramountcy and suzerainty of the Crown over the states. Treaties and Engagements between the States and the Paramount Power, their mutual obligations and all rights, authority and jurisdiction of the Crown were brought to an end. Only agreements relating to economic matters such as posts and telegraph, customs and communications etc. which it would have been disastrous to terminate suddenly were continued in force beyond August 15. Legally, the states became completely independent. The Government of India and Pakistan as successor Governments did not inherit any of the rights or authority of the former Government of India.
The Indian Independence Act thus did not attempt for a solution of the states' problem. That was left for the Dominion Government and the Constituent Assembly to solve. Immediately after the plan to divide the country and to transfer power was announced on June 3, 1947, the Interim Government decided to set up States Ministry to deal with the problem. The Ministry came into being on July 5, 1947\(^2\) with Sardar Patel as Minister in charge and V. P. Menon as Secretary of the Ministry. Sardar Patel issued an important statement defining the policy of the Government of India and inviting the states to accede to the Dominion on the 3 subjects defence, foreign affairs and communications in which common interest of the country involved.\(^3\) One of the challenging political problems that faced States Ministry was integration of native states, partly excluded and fully excluded areas, scattered in the north eastern part of India. Under the pretext of distinct existence, some areas claimed separate status in the new political reorganisation. But the timely accession of most of the north-east states to India saved the country from the

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catastrophe of a multitude of sovereignties springing up on the transfer of power.

Integration of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills

According to Administration Report of Assam for 1875-76, there were 19 semi-independent Khasi states. 4 But in 1924, there were 25 Khasi chiefs. 5 In August 1924, a meeting of the Khasi Chiefs was held in order to preserve their privileges and identity and the Khasi National Darbar was formed. In 1929, an attempt was made at the formation of the Federation of the Khasi States for uniting all the states of the Khasi Hills under one central government - the Khasi National Darbar. 6 All chiefs of all states were members of this Darbar. It also had an executive Council and a supreme court to hear appeals against the decisions of the State Darbar. The federation was established in 1933. The Khasi chiefs prayed to Viceroy Lord Linlithgow that they should be placed in direct relation with Viceroy through a Political Agent appointed exclusively for the

5 Rao V.V., A Century of Tribal Politics, p.36.
6 Rao V.W., Rekam Berrier and Hazarika Niru, A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, p.27.
states. The Viceroy did not accede to their request. In 1938, the Khasi chiefs again renewed their old demand and further they also demanded representation in the federal legislature. The Viceroy advised the Khasi states to form a federation and then ask for representation in the federation. Accordingly, the Khasi states formed a federation for the promotion of their common interests.

The Cabinet Mission plan was sent to all rulers of the Khasi States. The Sylmas and their ministers met on 1st July 1949 and resolved to revive the federation of the Khasi States which was formed in 1933. There were differences of opinion among Khasi leaders regarding the future of the Khasi states. Rev. Nicholas Roy wanted the Khasi states to be a part of Indian Union. Wickliffe, nephew of the Sylma of Mongatoin and his associates wanted independence of the Khasi states. Wickliffe, it was alleged, tried to induce the Sylmas of Mongatoin and other Sylmas to accede to Pakistan. There were moderates under the leadership of G.G. Swell who desired separation of the Khasi

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7 Ibid, pp.32-33.
8 Brash H., The History of Khasi People, pp.238-44.
Hills from Assam and place it directly under control of the Government of India.

There were extremist groups like the Hill Union and the Khasi National Darbar which demanded that all the people from the plains residing in the Khasi Hills should quit Khasi Hills immediately after the withdrawal of the British from India. They also demanded that the tribes must have the right to self-determination with the right to secede from Assam.

The Assam Governor Hyderi made an agreement with the Khasi states. This agreement was included in the Instrument of Accession. On 9th August 1947, a Standstill Agreement was signed between the Khasi states and the Province of Assam. On 2nd December, Governor Hyderi advised Sylens to sign the Instrument of Accession on 15 December individually. The Sylens met on 16th December 1947 to sign the instrument. The Sylens of Mylliam, Khyrin and Cherra refused to sign the instrument. Later on, they signed the Instrument of Accession when Governor Hyderi told them the consequences of not signing the Instrument of Accession. Two Sylens of Nongstoi and Rambrai did not sign the Instrument of Accession. But Hyderi could secure the signature of Sylens of Rambrai on 17th March 1948 and the Sylens of Nongstoi
en. 19th March 1948. Thus all the 25 Sylhet signed the Instrument of Accession. Then, Hydari requested all Sylhet to sign the merger agreement also. The Khasi Hills after forming a federation of their own, had both individually and collectively acceded to the Dominion of India subject to the provisions of an agreement. Thus, the Khasi Hill states were merged with the province of Assam. But some of the tribal traditions and customs of the Khasi States were preserved. Accordingly, under the Constitution of India the Khasi States had been included in the Sixth Schedule which recognises and identifies the backward areas. With the enforcement of the Constitution of India, the Khasi Hills along with Jaintia Hills had been constituted into a separate autonomous district of Assam known as 'United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District'. The terms of Agreement of the Federation of Khasi States which is a part of the Instrument of Accession are as follows:

All existing administrative arrangement between India and Assam on the one hand and the Khasi States on the other should with some exceptions continue in force until


modified arrangements had been arrived at between the respective authorities. 11

The exemptions were:

(i) Judicial Power - The Federation would set up a competent court to exercise judicial functions formerly vested to the political officer. 12

(ii) In matter of customary laws there would be no appeal from the court of the federation. In other cases, at that time, an appeal would lie to the Governor until a High Court of Assam was established.

(iii) The Judicial authority exercised by State Courts in respect of Khasi would be maintained.

(iv) For non-Khasi, the then existing judicial arrangement would continue except that judicial power of the political officer would be vested in the Court of the Federation, when its competence was recognised where non-Khasi had voluntarily agreed to submit to the jurisdiction of a state Court that Court would continue to be original trying court.


12 Ibid.
(v) Where State Courts complied with certain conditions to be laid down they might be vested with First, Second or Third class powers defined in criminal procedure code and their jurisdiction would then include both Khasis and non-Khasis. The appointment of magistrates to the State Courts and to the Court of Federation would be subject to the approval of the Governor in regard to their judicial competence. The Chief Justice of Assam High Court, when established, would assume such power vested in the Governors. 13

2. Administrative Power - With the exception of Excise, Forests and Land and Water right, all the remaining administrative functions would be common with the central or provincial Government under the terms of the stand still arrangement. 14

3. Revenue - The balance of the Khasi States Deposit Account should be handed over to the Federation and future payment to this Deposit Account should also be made over to the Federation until fresh arrangements have been reached in regard to contributions to be paid to the Federation by individual states. 15

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
4. The Khasi Territory in the province. All possible help should be given to facilitate unification of all Khasi territory. All Khasi villages that wanted to join should be allowed to do so.

5. Legislation - Regarding matters of legislation concerning subjects of common interest passed by the Assam Legislature there should be some machinery either by representation in that Legislature or otherwise set up whereby the legislation, where necessary, could be adopted or modified to suit the conditions and circumstances existing in the Khasi Hills.

The Lushai Hills: The British started very slowly to administer the Lushai Hills in the later part of the 19th century. In 1891-92, the British authorities started collecting land revenue or tribute either in cash or in kind. Even though this area was under the province of Assam, it was an 'excluded area' and administered by British officers and hereditary chiefs.

When the British realised that their rule in India was coming to an end, they started encouraging the

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Das Amiya Kumar, Assam's Agony, 1982, Delhi, p.260.
Lusheiis to take greater interest in administration and politics. McCall, the District officer of the Lushai Hills (1932-43) initiated this move and drew up a plan to group the hill areas of the North East India and some hill areas of Burma to be put under the trusteeship of the League of Nations. 19 Macdonald, his successor, also tried to carve out an area comprising the Lushai Hills and a part of Burma extending state of the British Government. He called Conference of the Lushai leaders and formulated a scheme known as the Macdonald scheme. Under this scheme only defence would be transferred to the Government of India. This conference drafted a constitution. But this constitution was 'clumsy and unworkable' and it was not accepted by the Mizo Union. 20 On 9th April 1946, a Mizo Union, a political party was formed. 21

When the transfer of power was imminent the Superintendent Macdonald thought that something should be done. So he brought into existence the District Conference, although there was no demand for it. The Mizo Union agreed


20 Rao V.V., A Century of Tribal Politics, 1976, Delhi, p.161.

21 Das Amiya Kumar, Ibid, p.261.
to the formation of district Conference. The first District Conference was held in 1946 and it laid down the principle that no one should be expelled from the village by Chiefs and this power was vested in the District Conference. 22

In 1947, the second District Conference was elected and the basis of election was joint electorate but 20 seats were reserved for Chiefs in the District Conference. Every voter was given 2 (two) ballots one for the election of the commoner and the other for the election of chiefs. 23 This system gave to the people a right in the selection of chiefs. But Mizo Union boycotted the District Conference.

During this time, the Bardoloi Committee visited the Lushai Hills in 1948. By the time the Bardoloi Committee visited the Lushai Hills, the Mizo Union was split into two, and both factions appeared before the Bardoloi Committee. 24

Thus there were two groups one is integrationist led by Pachhunga and another accensionist group led by Vantuhas, Women's Union also appeared before the Bardoloi

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22 Rao V.V., A Century of Tribal Politics, p.162.
23 Ibid, p.163.
24 Ibid, p.162.
Committee and demanded adult franchise and reservation of seats for women in the District Conference. 25 Z.B.Phizo and other Mizo leaders started fighting for independence of Nagaland and they visited Lushai Hills and persuaded the Mizos to join their movement. The Mizo leaders declined. In 1947, Gopinath Bardoloi invited the General Secretary of the Mizo Union. The Mizos received assurance from him that the Mizos would have representation in the making of Indian Constitution and the Lushai Hills would be given full autonomy. 26 Zaprawnge and Khautinkhuma represented the Mizo Union in the Assam sub-Committee to advise on constitutional proposals. Thus, they got autonomous status under 6th Schedule of Indian Constitution.

However, at the time of independence, the form of administration of Lushai Hills was uncertain. So, some Mizo leaders under the leadership of L.L.Peters, the last British District Officer of Lushai Hills held a meeting on 14th August 1947 at Aizawl. 27 The meeting took resolution which reads as follows: 'Resolved that if the Lushais are

26 Das Amiya Kumar, Assam's Agony, p.262.
27 Das Amiya Kumar, Assam's Agony, p.262.
to enter the Indian Union their main demands are (i) that the existing safeguards of their customary laws and the land tenure etc. should be maintained (ii) that the Chin Hills Regulation, 1896, and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, should be retained until such time as the Lushais themselves through their District Council or other parallel district authority declared that this can be abrogated (iii) that the Lushais will be allowed to opt out of the Indian Union, when they wish to do so, subject to a minimum period of ten years.

The dilemma of the Mizos was resolved in the constitution making stage. They expressed a keen desire to link their political life with Assam. Three members were elected from the Mizo Union to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1952.

Nagaland—After the second world war, when the issue of granting independence to India came up, the Nagas were also considering their own political future.

The gulf between the Nagas and other Indians were widened by the exclusion of the Nagas from the contact

28 Proceedings of the meeting of the Lushai leaders held at Aizawl on 14th August, 1947, Memo No.6927-76 of 21 August, 1947, Assam’s Agony, p.262.
and affairs of other parts of India under British rule.

Besides, the Christian Missionaries whipped up the inerterate prejudice against the Hindus. Thus, there arose separatist tendency among the Naga.

The Naga's demand for a separate status for their hill district had originated mainly after the second world war. But the idea of special status to Naga Hills area had been mooted as early as 1929, when Simon Commission had visited Kohima. 29 A few leaders of the Naga had formed a Naga club in Kohima and 5okokching 1 under official patronage. The members of the club were important village headmen, Government officials and educated persons. This club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in which they prayed that the British Government should continue to safeguard their rights against all encroachments from other people who were more advanced by placing the Naga Hills district directly under British protection. In the memorandum, the Naga had simply wished to be left alone in case the British decided to leave them at the mercy of others. Hence, at that time, the main issue was not the independence of the Naga hills district but just a

demand for special status for it under British India protection. And this was conceded to by the British Government. The Government of India Act of 1935 declared the Naga Hills district as an Excluded Area which meant the exclusion of that area wholly and partially from the purview of provincial autonomy. Such policy of exclusion followed by the British isolating tribal areas from Hindu and Muslim communities was condemned by the leaders of the Congress.

After the end of the second world war in 1945, the Naga leaders started the movement of a special status for the Naga Hill District, after British departure from India. In February, 1946, the educated Nagas had developed the Naga club into a social and political organisation known as Naga National Council in order to decide the future of Naga people. This was the first political organisation of Naga Hills. There were three main groups in Naga Hills, one group favoured immediate severance of all ties from India and declaration of independence for the Naga Hills, the second desired the continuance of the Government of

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Indie in the Naga Hills till it was in a position to take over the administration of the country, the third group wanted Naga Hills to be a mandatory territory under the British for a period of ten years.  

In the beginning of 1947, they started demanding for independence status for the Naga Hills area. The Naga National Council submitted a memorandum on 20th February, 1947 to the British Government expressed that "a constitution drawn up by the people who have no knowledge of the Naga's Hills and Naga People will be quite unsuitable and unacceptable to the Naga People". The Naga National Council made an appeal to the British Government and Indian Government to set up an Interim Government for the Naga people for a period of ten years at the end of which the Naga people should be free to choose the form of Government they liked. The appeal of the Nages failed to convince the British Government as the Naga Hills and other Naga areas had been always regarded as a part of the British India after they were brought under British control.

32 Rao V.V., A Century of Tribal Politics, pp.311-312.
34 Ibid.
although some local administrators were working for making these areas for a separate Crown Colony or Trust Territory when Conservative Party was in power in U.K. The British Government was silent to the Nagas' memorandum. However, it was pointed out that the Nagas made their political stand known to the Advisory Committee on the tribal areas of the Constituent Assembly.

Sir Andrew Clow, Governor of Assam found that it was too late for the British to consider anything like Naga independence or Crown Colony concept propounded by some of his predecessors, particularly Sir Robert Reid and J. P. Hill. The British Labour Government would decide what was best for India. The Governor also knew that co-existence between people of Assam plains and hills in a single political entity was perhaps impossible. However inter-dependence between the two was inevitable since they were inseparable in their geography and economy. Moreover, the Congress Government in power would safeguard the interest of the minorities including the Nagas and let them develop according to their own genius without any imposition or coercion of majority wills. So, the Governor did not support to the idea of an interim arrangement as demanded by the Nagas. On May 21, 1947,
the Naga leaders called upon the Assamese, to form an independent state without joining the Union of India.

A sub-committee of the Advisory Committee came to Kohima on 20th May 1947 and the members of the N.N.C. represented their case. The sub-committee gave them a patient hearing but ultimately replied that they have no power to recommend anything outside India, but only within the Indian Constitution.

On the failure of the mission of the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee to arrive at any agreement with the Nagas, on the future constitutional setup, Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam came to Kohima on 26th June 1947 to impress upon the Nagas to understand the realities of the situation.

After a series of meetings and discussions with members of Naga National Council for three days, they arrived at a compromise formula known as Hydari Agreement comprising nine points with the full consent of Mr. Bordoloi and Pandit Nehru.

36 Ghosh B.B., History of Nagaland, p.162.
37 Yomuo Asoso, p.171.
The preamble of the Agreement provided the Nagas "right to develop themselves according to their truly expressed wishes". 38

The first two articles of the Agreement were related to judicial and executive matters. All cases civil and criminal, arising among the Nagas in the Naga Hills would be disposed of by duly constituted Naga Courts according to the Naga customary laws or such law as would be introduced with the consent of the duly recognised Naga representatives organisation. In case of life imprisonment or death sentences the person concerned would have the right to appeal to the government.

In respect of the executive matters the general principle was laid, according to which "what the Naga National Council is prepared to pay for, the Naga National Council should control." This principle will apply equally to the district officers for Nagaland. 39 The most important provision was that no law passed by the provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the

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38 'Hyderi Agreement' Text - quoted from Dr. R. Monkekar's on the slippery slope in Nagaland. Appendix IV, pp. 195-96.

39 Ibid.
term of this agreement or the religious practices of Naga would have legal force in Naga hill without the consent of Naga National Council. 40

The N.N.C. was empowered to impose, collect and spend land revenues and house taxes. The Nagas were given assurance that their land would not be alienated to non-Naga without the consent of the N.N.C. The last provision which was related with the period of agreement ran as follows - "The Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of this agreement, and at the end of this period the Naga National Council would be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people would be arrived. 41"

Unanimity over these articles was almost reached but when the question of interpretation of the last point came up the trouble started. Sir Akbar Hydari and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had accepted the Agreement obviously intended that it was a peaceful step to bring the Nagas

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
into the Union of India by their own will, so as their future was not to be chosen outside India. The Governor Sir Akbar Hydari made his intention clear to the Nagas in the same evening of the agreement by stating that after the expiry of ten years the Nagas might change the administrative pattern within India with a view to securing an honourable place.

There was division between the extremists and moderates within the Naga National Council on the last clause of the agreement. The extremists read it to mean that after the expiry of ten years, the Nagas would become completely free to choose straight forward their future for independence at the sweet will of the Government of India.

The moderates supported it on the ground that it was a democratic and evolutionary step to meet the interests of Nagas and was a step ahead towards the self-rule.

In order to resolve the conflicting views of the extremists and moderates, the issue was voted in the presence of Sir Charles Paussey, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills. The majority of the moderates supported

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42 Yono Aono, p.176.
the past, while extremists were defeated in the Naga National Council. However the extremists declared the Agreement as invalid and stood for independence. The Indian leaders also were not prepared to risk the safety and security of India's north eastern border by allowing these hill people to remain independent of India. The British Government on the other hand was in a haste to grant independence to India. Consequently, India being a successor state inherited all such territories which formed a part of British India earlier except those which were earmarked for Pakistan. Therefore, the Naga Hills areas also became an integral part of independent India. The Naga National Council declared complete independence of the Naga people on 14 August 1947. The message of this declaration was sent to the king of England, to the Government of India and to the Secretary General of the U.N.O. On 15 August 1947, the Indian Government hoisted Indian National Flag in some areas of Kohima, but the flags were brought down by the Nagas.43

After the death of Sir Akbar Hyderi in 1948, Bardoloi the Premier of Assam told the Nagas on 9 November 1949

that the Hydari Agreement was no longer considered to exist by the Indian Government. Thus, the Agreement became useless, but gave rise to another form in the 6th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

The 6th schedule of the Indian Constitution enumerates in detail the administrative setup of all hill districts of Assam. The schedule was divided into two parts. While Part A dealt with the excluded areas of hill districts of Assam such as United Khasi and Jaintia hills, the Lushai Hills and the Naga Hills, Part B dealt with North Eastern Frontier including Sálipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Abor Hill District and the Naga tribal areas. The Constitution made hill districts, which were placed under Part A.

Tripura: The History of freedom movement in Tripura started in the early part of the present century. The struggle for independence by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi had its impact on Tripura and the result was growth of political consciousness among the people. The political movement in Tripura was

44 Yonuo Anoso, p.178.
marked by two distinct phases. The first phase commenced with the revolutionary activities against the British Government in the first decade of this century and ended in the late thirties. The second phase commenced with a movement against the oppressive measures of the princely administration. 45

The first phase of the freedom movement in Tripura was anti-British in nature. The Anusilan and Jugantar underground parties of Bengal came to Tripura for shelter. 46 Tripura was regarded by freedom fighters as a safe resort because British laws were inoperative here. The Maharaja enjoyed independence of action in the sphere of internal administration of the state. Important leaders of Bengal terrorism visited Tripura and revolutionary pamphlets were off and on smuggled out to and from Tripura by secret hands. 47 In the beginning, they did not do anything against the state of Tripura. The British Government persuaded the

46 Roy Choudhury Nalini Ranjan, The Historical Past from Tripura by Gan Choudhury.
47 De Ranjit Kumar, Terrorist Activities in Tripura (1930-33), Proceedings of North East India History Association 6th session, Agartala, 1985, p.371
Government of Tripura to take strong actions against the revolutionaries. So, the Tripura Government took measures to prevent entry of political suspects into the state and carrying on political activities inside Tripura. The British Government issued clear instructions that whenever any political suspects would enter or leave the territory the matter must be reported to the British Police immediately in addition to sending weekly report in this regard. The Tripura Government acted according to the instructions of the British authorities and this was clear from their report about Mishikanta Ghosh who after being expelled from Bengal in connection with the British Conspiracy Case on 9 December 1915 entered into Tripura. The branches of Anusilan Samiti increased gradually and spread over Tripura. For the purpose of giving training to its members, the Samiti had two agricultural farms at Pilania and Udaipur in Hill Tipperah. Another training centre was functioning at a tea-garden at Kailasahar.

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48 Roy Chaudhury Nalini Ranjan, Tripura Through Ages 1977, p.70.
49 Confidential letter of the Chief Dewan, Political Department, Tripura State to J. Bartley Camp Darjeeling dated 30.9.16 D.O., No.295, Tripura District Gazetteer. 9.119
51 Director of Public Relations and Tourism Government of Tripura.
centre was reported to have started at Malagarh.  

According to one writer, the Samiti opened one secret branch at Raja Babu's house, Krishnanagar Agartala in 1931. Another call was also opened at Nursing Akhara. These centres were used as centres for training in the use of different kinds of arms.

In 1927 Khilafat and non-co-operation agitators began to enter into Tripura from adjoining British districts. They came to Tripura to collect subscription but they were sent back like other political agitators.

In May 1921, porter trouble broke out at Chandpur and this led the railwaymen's strike and general hartal. Non-co-operation agitation broke out in Mogra, Kailasahar, Dhorengar and Bilonia Divisions as a retaliation for the action of the Tripura Garbar in supplying provisions to the European staff. In Kailasahar, non-co-operation

52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Roy Choudhury Nalini Ronjon, Tripura Through Ages, p.70.
56 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.121.
57 Minister's confidential letter No 566 to the Political Agent Agartala dated 11 June 1921. Ibid.
meetings were held in Gangaasagar, Muktai and Manikbandar mauzes. According to the request of the Political Agent, Tripura Government issued orders to all Divisional Officers to prevent political meetings in the state within seven miles from tea-gardens.

In Kailanagar, the agitators were trying to persuade the grocers of Balaganj not to supply foodstuff to Agartala because ration was supplied to the European staff of Akhaura station from Agartala.

There were also many local organisations like Chhetra Sangha, Bhatri Sangha, Matri Sangha, Milan Sangha etc. The Milan Sangha was founded by Sukumar Bhowik in 1931 at present East Agartala Thana, Benamalipur. The object of Milan Sangha was to attain the freedom of the country by means of violence. On 4 March 1932, the Political Agent of Tripura said that this party was a dangerous one.

58 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.122.
59 Letter No. N77-2 of the Political Agent Tripura, to the Minister of Tripura dated 11 June 1921, Ibid.
60 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.123.
62 Note of Political Agent dated 23.6.32 Secretariats Archivus, Ibid.
These Sanghas carried on revolutionary activities in Tripura. On 26 January 1930, the Bharati Sangha called for a strike in schools and observed independence day. The Tripura Government expelled some students from their schools and arrested some youth leaders of the organisation. The Tripura Government signed a pact with the British Government by which the British Government could arrest any suspected person from the state of Tripura.

Active members of these Sanghas were highly influenced by militant organisation like Anusilan Samiti. The Bharati Sangha established secret contact with terrorists of Chittagong.

On 14 December 1931, the Political Agent C.G.B. Stevens was shot at his bungalow at Comilla. The Maharaja closed offices and institutions for three days. In 1932, a political decoy was committed at Agartala by some members of Anusilan Samiti. Pabitra Paul, Sachindra Dutta and

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63 Roychoudhury Malini Ranjan, Ibid, p.43.
64 Ibid.
65 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.124.
67 Tripura State Gazette, p.266.
68 Roy Choudhury Malini Ranjan, Tripura Through the Ages, p.72.
Krishnapada Chakravarty were arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. 69 Two more deaths were committed, one at Mogra Bazar on 13 June 1932 night and other on 27 June 1932 night at Nayan Bazar under Kesba Police Station. 70 Both of these deaths were committed by some members of the Sialen Sangha of Agartala. 71

The British Government observed activities of revolutionaries carried inside Tripura and sent instructions to the Tripura Government to take strong actions against political suspects. The then Political Agent in a secret letter to Sama Bahadur dated 7 October 1932 described these terrorists as the Bolsheviks. 72 Thus, the first phase of the political movement in Tripura came to a close with the arrest of almost all the political leaders and workers.

The second phase of the political movement began with the release of the political leaders and workers in 1936-37. Most of the members of Bhatri Sangha were released by the Government before 1938. A new organisation called Tripura

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69 Sen Tripur Chandra, p. 58.
70 De Ranjit Kumar, Ibid, p. 376.
71 Ibid.
Rajya Cane Parishad came into existence. Opinions differ regarding the date of formation of Tribura Rajya Cane Parishad. According to some writers, it was founded in 1935. But according to Nalini Ranjan Roy Choudhury it was founded in 1938. Sachindra Lal Singh, Harisanga Prasad, Sukhamoy Sengupta, Umes Lal Singh etc. were the pioneers of this organisation. Its ideas and objects were those of the Indian National Congress. A 20 points demand including those for abolition of tailling (a system by which villagers were compelled to carry luggages of the officials on tour), some feudal taxes i.e. Charki (family tax) Ghauri (tax on cutting of grass), removal of all restrictions on political activities and introduction of land reforms etc. formed spearhead of this movement. Thus it became a champion for the cause of poor peasants.

The Janamangal Samiti came into existence in 1938.

73 Tribura District Gazetteer, p.125.
74 Roy Choudhury N.R., Tribura Through Ages, p.72.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
The Samiti became very popular among the masses. It opened 8 branches in the mofussil areas and the number of its members rose up to 167 even in the first year of its birth. 79 Banam Thakur, Birra Cutta, Pravat Roy, Sukumar Bhowmik and Kirti Singha were the leaders of this organisation. 80 It raised the demand for responsible government in Tripura. In order to suppress the Janamangal movement, the Maharaja arrested some of its leaders under O.I.R. and detained them in jail. 81 But the Janamangal under the leadership of Gangaprasad Sharma carried forward the movement.

Revolutionary activities increased in the early part of 1939. 82 Some students of the U.K. Academy and Tulabhethi Girls' High School at Agartala hoisted Congress flag in front of their schools. 83 Sachindralal Singha for his "seditious and inflammatory speeches" was exiled from Tripura.
for 1 year. Some revolutionaries were exiled from Tripura. These exiled revolutionaries had contact with inhabitants of borders of Tripura who were subjects of Maharaja's Zamindary of Chakla Roshnabad. They were asked to approach the Maharaja to abolish some taxes. In 1939-41, there was agitation in Chakla Roshnabad against some taxes imposed by the Maharaja on his Chakla Roshnabad tenants. With a view to appease the aggrieved cultivators of the Chakla Roshnabad, the Maharaja convened Chakla Roshnabad Praja Sammelan and announced remission of arrear revenue for three years in that Conference. But the Conference was abruptly dissolved when people demanded immediate release of their leaders.

The Tripura Government expelled many leaders from Tripura and restrictions were made on the movement of workers inside the state and all meetings and processions were banned. These repressive measures of the Maharaja could not suppress the popular movement. So, the Maharaja

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84 By order of His Highness the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur, signed by J. Sen Minister on 23.4.39 (9.1.49 Tripura Era).


87 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.126.
introduced some administrative reforms to meet the demands of the people. In 1938 Praja Mandal Act was passed. 88 This Act included provision for holding elections on communal basis. The political parties resented provisions of the Act and boycotted election.

When the Second World War broke out on 3rd September 1939, the Tripura Government banned the Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad and the Tripura State Congress. 89 Many workers were held in detention as security prisoners. All meetings and processions were banned and thus civil liberty was totally curbed. The security prisoners were reported to have been treated very badly. Rashi Thakur, Prabhat Roy, Biren Dutta, Sukumar Prounik and other leaders bravely faced torture and harassment at the hands of the authority. 90.

In 1939 a delegation was sent from Tripura to Gandhiji who was then at Malikanda in Dacca district and he is reported to have advised them to put up a relentless

88 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.126.
fight against feudal oppressions with courage and
determination. 91

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was an enlightened
ruler and to meet public demand for responsible government,
he declared a semi-popular Constitution for the state in
1939. Thus, Tripura State Constitution was passed in the
year 1941 and issued orders for its immediate implementation.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE TRIPURA STATE (THE GOVERNMENT OF
TRIPURA ACT 1351 T.E.)

This Constitution consisted of seven parts and three
schedules. King was at the head of administration. 92 All
executive actions of the Government of Tripura should be
expressed to be taken in the name of His Highness. To assist
His Highness in matters connected with due exercise of his
rights and authority, there shall be a "Raja sa" or Privy
Council comprised of not less than 5 and not more than 15
notable persons, official or non-official, appointed as
members by His Highness in his discretion for a term not
exceeding 5 years. 93 The function of the Raja sa should

93 The Constitution of the Tripura State Part II 5(a)
(I), p.2.
be to advise or assist the Maharaja when called on to
do so. 94 Part III provided for a Mantri-Parished (Council
or Ministers). "The Mantri-Parished shall consist of a
Chief Minister and not more than four other Ministers as
his colleagues, whose actual number shall be specified
by His Highness from time to time in his discretion". 95
The Chief Minister should "be mainly responsible to His
Highness for good government of the state". 96 Part IV
provided for a Legislative Assembly or "Tripur Vyavasthak
Sava". It should be "composed of a President and the
Ministers of the State as members ex-officio, and 49
other members, of whom 29 shall be elected by the people
and 20 nominated by His Highness in his discretion". 97
The term of the Legislative Assembly was 3 years. 98 It
had "power to make laws for the whole of the Tripura
State or any part thereof..." 99 "The Khâa Adalat, which

95 Ibid, Part III II(b), p.4.
96 Ibid, (d), p.5.
is the highest judicial Tribunal in the state shall be styled the High Court of Judicature, Tripura, and it shall be composed of not less than three judges." 100

Although the new Constitution was issued for immediate implementation, no action was taken in this regard in view of the Second World War. The Constitution was framed to counteract the popular movement and to mobilize the royal chiefs of the plains.

During the Second World War, the economic condition of Tripura deteriorated. Some special taxes were imposed on the people for 'War Fund' by the Maharaja. There was acute shortage of essential goods. 101 Many organisations came into existence. A Harijan organisation under the leadership of Sukhamoy Sengupta came into existence (1938-39). 102 Tripura Motor Workers Association was established in 1940-41. 103

The demand for responsible government continued. So, the Maharaja took up many regressive measures. On

100 Ibid, Part V, 45(m), p.17.
101 War Supplement to the Tripura State Gazette, June 30, 1943.
103 Ibid.
6th September 1942 the Government of Tripura banned the Congress Working Committee, the All India Congress Committee and all provincial and District Congress Committee were declared unlawful association. But these repressive measures only aggravated the discontent of the people all the more.

In 1942-43, the Raanga led by Ratanmani Noatia started movement against the oppressions of feudal system. But this movement was suppressed ruthlessly by the royal force and Ratanmani was arrested with followers. Ratanmani expired while under detention in Agartala.

Jawaharlal Nehru was informed of imprisonment of members of Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad and other leaders without trial since the beginning of the Second World War. The prisoners were reported to have been treated very badly. He sent a letter to the Maharaja of Tripura on 9 December 1945. The Maharaja in his reply denied all these charges.

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104 Notification No.176, dated, Agartala, the 6th September 1942 by Chief Minister Tripura State.
106 File No.1945 852 S.9A.3 Administrative Department.
107 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.126.
In December 1945, the Tripura Government removed ban on all political organisations. But the order empowering the Magistrate and the Police to stop unlawful meetings and processions and also to control the same organised under lawful order from the competent authority continued up to January 18, 1946 as is evidenced from a secret note from the Minister, Police Department to the Minister, Political Department.

In 1945, Tripura Rajya Janata Sikh Satyagi was formed. Abdul Barik (Gadu Mia) formed Anjuman Islamia in 1945 at Agartala and its branches were established in all Muslim majority areas. Its aims and objects were to improve the integrity of the Muslims of Tripura. About the same time, another socio-religious organisation was formed under the name Tripura Rajya Mslem Praja Majlish by Arman Ali Munshi and Farid Mia of Udaipur. It was a rival institution of Anjuman Islamia. In 1946, Tripura

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109 Tripura District Gazetteer, p.127.
110 Roy Choudhury M.P., p.76.
111 Ibid, p.75.
112 Ibid.
State Congress came into existence and Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad was merged with Tripura State Congress. It was functioning as a district unit under the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. Important leaders were Sachindra Lal Singh, Sukhamoy Sengupta, Umesh Lal Singh etc. Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal was established in 1946. In 1947 a conference of tribal people of Tripura established Tripura Sangha and it was patronised and recognised by the Maharaja.\(^{114}\) Sir Bikram Tripura Sangha was formed after the death of Sir Bikram Manikya in 1947 and it was patronised by Durjoy Kishore Deb Burman, the step brother of the late Maharaja.

The Maharaja was an intelligent king. He could foresee changes that might take place in native states of India with India’s independence. So, he expressed his decision in favour of joining the Indian Dominion.

After the death of Sir Bikram Kishore Manikya on May 17, 1947, his son Kirit Bikram became the Maharaja of Tripura.\(^{115}\) He was a minor, so a Council of Regency

\(\text{\footnotesize References:} \)

113 Roy Choudhury N.R., p.77.
114 Ibid, p.76.
under the Presidenship of Kirit Bikram's mother Kanchan Prabha Devi was formed to run the administration. The Council of Regency consisted of the following:

1. Srimati Maharani Kanchan Prabha Devi - President
2. Sri Maharaj Kumar Brijendra Kishore
   Dev Burman Bahadur - Vice-President
3. Major Sri Jutakumar Rankimibhari
   Dev Burman Bahadur - Member
4. Rajyaratna Sri Syltyabatra
   Mukherjee M.A. 116 - Member

Girija Shanker Guha was sent as representative of Tripura to the Constituent Assembly on 29 April 1947. 117 The Regent Maharani signed the Instrument of Accession on August 13, 1947. 118 Thus Tripura State's accesssion to the Indian Union was formally solemnised. The Regent Maharani, in her proclamation on November 11, 1947 gave notice to the last desire of the late Maharaja. She said

116 Gazette Notification by Brijendra Kishore Dev Burman, Prime Minister of Tripura and Khonjel Sunday 17 August 1947, 1st Issue No.2.


the accession of this state to the Indian Union was
decided by the late ruler after due consideration and
full consultation with all sections of the people. 119

The movement for responsible government was resumed
after the Regent took over the charge of Tripura
administration. On the occasion of 15th August 1947,
the Regent declared that some popular reforms would be
introduced in Tripura very soon. 120 The Regent also
announced that three ministers would be appointed, two
Hindus and one Muslim. 121 During this time, Tripura faced
a great crisis "unprecedented in its long history". The
Muslims of Tripura and Comilla under the leadership of
Abdul Barik conspired with the Maharaj Kuswar Durjoy Kishore
Dev Burman, a step brother of the late Maharaj for the
merger of the state to Pakistan and preparation had been
made to invade Tripura. 122 On 19 October 1947, a public
meeting was organised by Eastern Border of East Pakistan
People's Union at Golabari (Pakistan's border area) in

119 Proclamation made by the Maharani Kanchan Prabha

120 Proclamation of the Regent on 15th August 1947 on
the occasion of Independence Day celebration and
Naba Jeqaran a Bengali bi-weekly paper August 1947
edited by Pandit Ganga Prasad and Mirul Huda.

121 Ibid.

122 This information was given to me by R.K.Komaljit
a politician of that time.
protest against Tripura Government's signing of Instrument of Accession with Indian Dominion.\textsuperscript{123} In reply to this public meeting of Golabari, Tripura Sangha, Tripuri State Congress, Tripura Rajya Forward Block, Muslim Praja Majlish and Hindu Mahasabha organised a public meeting at Agartala in support of Tripura's signing of Instrument of Accession with Indian Dominion.\textsuperscript{124} This public meeting demanded full responsible government in Tripura, dismissal of newly appointed ministers who lost confidence of the people, dismissal of S.V. Mukherjee,\textsuperscript{125} Prime Minister of Tripura Government, drafting of a new Constitution by a constituent assembly and forming of an interim ministry.\textsuperscript{126} On 10 November 1947, a big public meeting (attended by twelve thousand people) was organised by all Samitis of Tripura on the ground of Ushakanta Academy in support of Tripura's accession to the Indian Dominion. The meeting resolved to defend Tripura against foreign invasion. The meeting also

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Naba Jageran a Bengali Bi-Weekly paper, October 1947. Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Abhudei a Bengali Weekly Newspaper 1st issue 1947.
\item \textsuperscript{125} S.V. Mukherjee was known as "Ramchandra Kek of Tripura", a nickname given by the politicians of that time - R.K. Kamaaji Singh.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Abhudei a Bengali Weekly paper 1st issue 1947.
\end{itemize}
demanded the resignation of S.V. Mukherjee from Prime Ministership and establishment and establishment of full responsible government in Tripura.\textsuperscript{127} Tripura State Congress sent State Congress Secretary Umeshlal Singh, Sukhramoy Sengupta and Anil Chakrabarti to New Delhi, in order to consult political condition of Tripura with the Indian President, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{128} S.V. Mukherjee, Prime Minister of Tripura resigned from Prime Ministership and his resignation was accepted by the Regent Maharani.\textsuperscript{129} During this time, Assam's Governor Sir Hyder Ali visited Tripura to meet the Regent Maharani.\textsuperscript{130} The Regent announced in December 1947 again that Tripura would have a fully democratic constitution and it would be framed by a body to be constituted on a properly democratic basis.\textsuperscript{131} On 12 January 1948, the Council of Regency was dissolved on the advice of the Government of India.\textsuperscript{132} A new Chief Minister was appointed.\textsuperscript{133} The

\textsuperscript{127} Khonjel a Maninuri Newspaper of Tripura 1st issue No.6 Sunday, 16 November 1947.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. 1st Issue No.7 1st December, Monday 1947.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} Proclamation of the Regent Kanchen Prabha in December 1947, Tripura State Gazette, pp.316-19.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, p.319.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
Mehran became the sole Regent by exercising section 61 of the Government of Tripura Act 1941.\textsuperscript{134} After a few months, the post of the Chief Minister was transferred to the post of Dewan of the state on March 21, 1948 and the Dewan was assisted by one Adviser and two or three Secretaries in day to day administration. These declarations satisfied the Tripura State Congress but Tripura Praja Mandal could not remain content with mere declarations. There was no sign of administrative changes and no step was taken to fulfill the promises for setting up responsible government. So the Praja Mandal began movement for establishing responsible government. The Praja Mandal organised many meetings and processions and demanded abolition of Dewan administration. The Government of Tripura banned the Praja Mandal and arrested many leaders i.e. Biren Dutta, Ranji Thakur and Pravat Roy and workers.

After partition, many refugees came to Tripura and the Tripura Government started giving settlement to the refugees even in grazing grounds of the tribals. Besides, a large area of lands of tribals was forcefully occupied by some non-tribal money lenders.\textsuperscript{135} The hill people stood against

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.

all these injustices under the leadership of the Praja Mandal. The government tried to crush the movement with the help of military personnel.\textsuperscript{136} The Tripura Rajya Cane Mukti Parishad was formed in order to confront repressive measures of the Government.\textsuperscript{137} The military and police forces killed many innocent people and burnt down many houses. In 1949, a branch of the Communist Party was formed in Tripura. Repressive measures and military atrocities in Golaghat, Champa Haor, Kalyanpur, Raschandra Ghat, Padma bil etc. brought the suffering people to consolidate and hit back.\textsuperscript{138} During this period, the administration of Tripura was practically confined to sub-divisional headquarters only.\textsuperscript{139} Military rule was declared over the entire Khumul Sub-Division.\textsuperscript{140} The most brutal of all was the firing at Padma bil Khumul killing three women, who rushed to save their tender aged sons from torture by the military personnel.\textsuperscript{141} But

\begin{flushleft}
136 Chakraborti Purnjan Prasad, Rajmola O Achunch Tripura, p.152.


138 Chakraborti Purnjan Prasad, p.151.

139 ibid, p.43.

140 Ibid.

141 Sen Tinitur Chandra, p.71.
\end{flushleft}
according to some writers these three women were the members of Gana Fuki Parishad Nari Babini. A strong volunteer corps named Gana Fuki Parishad Nari Babini was formed to resist military atrocities and on 28 March 1949 three members of this organisation Birangana Mahutti, Rupasree and Kumari Sedan were shot dead by military. 142 The Communist Party members composed songs on the slaughter which were sung in numerous public meetings all over Tripura and it helped to create public opinion against military repression of the government. The situation thus took a serious turn. Thus the Communist Party alone stood firmly by the struggling people and guided the resistance movement. It became very popular among the people of Tripura which was reflected in the electoral success in years to come.

It was probably the gravity of the situation that led the Governor of Assam Sri Prakasa to visit Agartala on Monday, 25 April 1949. 143 The Government of India took timely cognizance of the situation and Tripura was protected

142 Chakraborti Puranjan Prasad, pp.151-52.

143 Programme for the visit of His Excellency the Governor of Assam to Agartala, No.156/P to personal Secretary to H.H. The Maharaja of Tripura on 11.1.49, Tripura Gov.
and saved.\textsuperscript{144} For integration of Tripura into the new polity, the instrument of Merger was necessary to negotiate with the Regent Maharani. The Regent Maharani signed the Agreement of Merger of Tripura with the Indian Union on September 9, 1949 in New Delhi. Thus ended centuries of princely rule and it promised to usher in an era of rapid economic growth. This Merger Agreement was signed by Maharani Regent Kanchan Prabha Devi on behalf of Tripura State and V. P. Menon on behalf of the Government of India.

The preamble of the Merger Agreement laid down that it is in the best interest of the state of Tripura.

Art I ceded Tripura to the Dominion Government of India with effect from 15.10.1949.\textsuperscript{145}

Art II mentioned that the Maharaja shall with effect from the said day\textsuperscript{146} be entitled to receive from the revenues of the state annually for his privy purse the sum of Rupees 3 lacs and thirty thousand only free of taxes.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{144} Sardar Patel's Correspondence (1973), Vol.V, pp.426-27.
\textsuperscript{145} White Paper on Indian States, 1950, Appendix XXXI, p.229.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, p.229.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, p.229.
Art III entitled to the full ownership use and enjoyment of all private properties. 148

Art IV entitled the Maharaja all the personal rights, privileges, immunities and dignities enjoyed by him as the Ruler of Tripura. 149

Art V mentioned that all the members of Maharaja's family including Her Highness the Rajmata should be entitled all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them. 150

Art VI guaranteed the succession according to law and custom to the gaddi of the state and to the Maharaja's personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles. 151

Art VII laid down that no enquiry should be made and no proceedings should be made in any court of Tripura against the Maharaja or the Her Highness the Maharani Regent for anything done during the period of his or her administration of the State. 152

Art VIII laid down that the Government of India hereby guaranteed either the continuance in service of the permanent members of the public services of Tripura on conditions which would be no less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of Tripura was made over to the Government of India or the payment of reasonable compensation.

The Government of India further guaranteed the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by the Government of His Highness the Maharaja to members of the public services of the state who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date on which the administration of Tripura was made over to the Government of India. 153

Art IX mentioned that except with the previous sanctions of the Government of India no proceedings, civil or criminal, should be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of his duties as a servant of the state before

the day on which the administration was made over to the Government of India.154

From the 15th October 1949 a Chief Commissioner took over Tripura administration.155 Indian Constitution had came into force on 26 January 1950. It classified the Union of States into four categories — Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D States. Tripura became a Part 'C' state and was ruled by a Chief Commissioner on behalf of the President of India, Sri R.K. Roy, I.C.S. who was Dewan of the Tripura State from 8.7.49 took over as Chief Commissioner of Tripura on 15.10.49.156

Manipur — The movement for responsible government in Manipur started in 1934. The growth of political consciousness in Manipur started late. The people led by Nikhil Maniuri Mahasabha demanded a responsible government.

154 Ibid, p.231.
156 Notification No.IP/XIX-1/49 Agartala 1, 15 October 1949.
157 Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha was established on 30 May 1934 under the Presidentship of Maharaja Sir Churachand Singh. The word Hindu was dropped by the Mahasabha's fourth meeting at Chinga on 29 to 30 December 1938. It became a full-fledged political party — Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha — Yeima L. and Maipaksana R.K., 1983, Imphal, p.2.
defying prohibitory laws with full vigour. They also demanded abolition of misuse privileges of the king. The Mahasabha continued to press for formulation of legislative assembly, elected by universal adult franchise, fixation of civil list and installation of a popular ministry to govern themselves.

The Manipur State Congress has been demanding establishment of responsible government before India got independence. Again, as early as 1945, Irobot demanded responsible form of government. He regenerated political organisations like Praja Sammelani, Praja Sangha, Mahila Samsadani etc. and demanded the reformation of responsible government vigorously.¹⁵⁸ In the second general conference of Krishak Sabha held at Hambol under the Presidency of Irobot in 1946, it was resolved that responsible form of government must be established in Manipur.¹⁵⁹ The first request for the introduction of reforms had been made in 1938.¹⁶⁰ Maharaja Churachand received a petition signed by 356 members of the public asking for setting up of a Legislative

¹⁵⁹ Shatrughini, Manipuri Itihasa Irobot, 1972, p.44.
Council. In 1939 Nikhil Maniuru Mahasabha demanded for a unicameral legislature of 100 members, 80 to be elected, 20 to be nominated by the Maharaja.

The popular vigour of this movement was heightened by 'Women War' or 'Nupi Lul', which began from 12 December 1939. It brought the question of introducing reforms in Manipur. Some businessmen, in order to make a good profit by raising prices, began to hoard rice to monopolise the trade. The effect was felt very soon. So, women rose against it. According to Mr. Sharpe, Dorbar President, it brought the issue of administrative reform to the fore front primarily against the business community who reaped rich profit due to famine by exporting rice from Manipur. The women's war was gradually taken over by the Mahasabha and it used the women's war as a tool for fermenting agitation on Congress lines. The situation was soon completely out of control and the State Police could not prevent a large meeting held in the Police Bazar on 14th January 1940. The Maharaja, therefore took up the issue.

161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
with the Governor of Assam for establishment of Legislative Assembly, Chief Court and other reforms. The Governor avoided the main issues but granted the Chief Court and some administrative measures. The British authorities considered that Manipur was not ripe for democracy. Churachand Maharaja abdicated the throne of Manipur in favour of his son Budhachandra Singh in the month of September 1941 and on the death of Churachand Maharaja, Budhachandra ascended the throne of Manipur on 1st April 1942.

On May 10, 1942, the Second World War broke out and it devastated Manipur completely but the war gave a golden opportunity to the people to contact people of other Indian states. Thus, the currents of Indian political movements started flowing into Manipur.

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166 Administrative Report of the Manipur State for the year 1940-41, p.3.
167 Gourahari, Manipur and World War II 1983, p.68.
After the end of the war, the Manipur Praja Sammelani on 4 September 1946, renewed demand for a responsible government. In 1946 Praja Sammelani and Manipur Praja Mandal were united and they formed a new party called Manipur Praja Sangha. In 1946, the Sangha took a resolution to demand for a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers. In October 1946, Manipur State Congress came into existence. In November 1946, the Congress Working Committee decided to press for responsible government in Manipur. Thus, the State Congress and other parties took up the issue jointly and vigorously.

With the impending withdrawal of British from India, the king pressed the Darbar to set up a Constitution Making Committee in order to make a Constitution of Manipur. In January 1947, Maharaja Bodhachandra had announced his desire to introduce a fully democratic and constitutional form of government in Manipur. To associate his people more closely with the administration of the state a Constitution Making Committee was constituted with 15 members.

169 Shyamkonha, Ibid, p.56.
170 Shatradhari 3., Ibid, p.44.
The Constitution Making Committee would consist of 15 members:

1. 3 members nominated by the P.M.S.O. from the Darbar including P.M.S.O. himself as the Chairman of the Committee.

2. One member deputed by the Chairman of Chief Court from the judicial department.

3. One member nominated by His Highness from the Palace.

4. One representative deputed by each of the Tehsil Circles from Five Tehsils.

5. One representative deputed by each of the Areas viz. Ukhrul, Mao, Tamenglong, Churachandpur and South East Areas.

The Maharaja said that the new constitution would be drafted in such a way that it might not be in conflict with the age old traditions. He was influenced by the development of democratic tendencies in other states of India. He was also influenced by the announcement of the British Cabinet Mission of the need of introducing a new constitution in Indian states based on more or less popular and responsible government. In his own words —

"In consequence of the announcement made by the British Cabinet Mission of the need of introducing new constitution in the Indian States based more or less on popular and responsible government as far as possible according to local condition I hereby order that a constitution making Committee consisting representatives from Hills and Valleys, officials and non officials, ....... should be set up to draw up a New Constitution for the governance of Manipur."

The Constitution Making Committee was inaugurated by the Maharaja on Monday 10th March 1947 at the Manipur State Darbar Hall. The Committee had the following members.

1. F.F. Pearson - Chairman
2. S. Suwrendra Singh - Member
3. Monlani Nuzii Wellinulla - Member
4. Iboongohal - Member
5. A. Mineketan - Member
6. H. Duijamani Dev Sarma - Member
7. S. Krisnasmohan - Member
8. L. Jugeshwar - Member

172 Maharaja’s announcement to March 1947 - Bhagyavati Patrike, 10 March 1947, Special issue.

9. D.K. Leiren - Member
10. Mera Jatra - Member
11. Daiho - Member
12. Tangkhopao - Member
13. M.K. Shimal - Member
14. Tebkilong - Member
15. Tengkham - Member

The first meeting of the Constitution Making Committee was held on 24 March 1947. Two Sub-Committees were formed on 29 March 1947 - Constitution Drafting Sub-Committee and Hill Regulation Drafting Sub-Committee. Constitution Drafting Sub-Committee consisted of L.Iboogohal, A.Minaketen, H.Duijameni Dev Sarma, Krishnamohan and A.Daiho. The Hill Regulation Drafting Sub-Committee consisted of F.F. Pearson, A.Minaketen, A.Daiho, Suia, T.C. Tienkham, Teba Kilong and Dr. Leiren.

Taking hardly two months in drafting, the Draft Constitution was submitted to the Constitution Making Committee. It was passed on 8 May 1947 and submitted

to the Maharaja on 26 July 1947. 177

**IMPORTANT FEATURES OF MANIPUR CONSTITUTION 1947**

It is no tall claim that the Manipur Constitution of 1947 was made on the British pattern with the executive fully responsible to the Legislature. Under this, constitutional monarchy was established in Manipur for the first time.

The Constitution consisted of eleven parts with 58 Articles. This Constitution should apply to the whole of Manipur State inclusive of the Hill Areas saving that it should not apply in any matter where a specific reservation of powers was made to any Authority in the Hills under the provisions of the Manipur State Hill (Administration), 1947. 178 The Government of the State should be conducted in the name of the king. Succession to the throne should be governed by the law of primogeniture and the heir must be legitimate son of a marriage recognised by the Council of Ministers. 179

177 The Maharaja's letter to Chief Minister on 16.11.47 – Ibotomhi - Congress and Manipur Statehood, p.5.

178 Manipur Constitution, Chapter I, Art.2.

179 Ibid, Art.4.
PREROGATIVES OF MAHARAJA

The Maharaja had some prerogatives under the Constitution. All royal family matters were the sole concern of the Maharaja as the head of the ruling family. He was the 'Defender of Faith', therefore all matters connected with Titles, Honours and palace ceremonies should be the sole concern of the Maharaja's personal prerogatives. In short the Maharaja was supreme both secularly and religiously. The Maharaja and the Maharani were neither be made answerable at law or subject to any legal proceedings in the state Courts. Their persons and properties should be inviolable.

The Constitution expressed that "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". It means that the king was bound by Constitutional provisions regarding the executive of the state, it was provided that "subject to the provisions of this Act and subject also to the provisions of the Rules for the

180 Ibid, Art.8.
181 Ibid, Sec.3.
Administration of Manipur State the Executive Authority of the State is delegated to and shall vest in the Council of Ministers.182 The Council of Ministry would have seven Ministers including the Chief Minister. The important feature about the Council was that the Chief Minister should not be elected but "shall be appointed by the Maharaja." The Chief Minister had to consult the Maharaja while distributing portfolios among the Ministers. It was also precisely stated that "The Council of Ministers shall have a common seal and shall be jointly responsible to the Maharaja for the administration of the state."183

THE STATE ASSEMBLY

Chapter IV provided for a State Assembly. "The Assembly was to be elected for a period of three years and "shall comprise representatives freely elected by the people on the adult franchise and on the principle of joint electorate."184

The Assembly could debate all matters concerning the Government and well being of the state and it would have a speaker and deputy speaker.

182 Ibid, Chapter III, Sec.10, Clause(s).
183 Ibid, Art.12.
184 Ibid, Chapter IV, Art.17.
JUDICIARY

There should be complete separation of the judiciary from the executive. "The Judicature of the state shall be as laid down in the Manipur State Court Act, 1947." 185

The Chief Justice of the state and two Subordinate Judges should be appointed by the Maharaja-in-Council and judges might be removed by the Maharaja-in-Council on the grounds of misbehaviour or of infirmity of body and mind. 186

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The Court language of the State should be Manipuri or English. 187

If one critically analyses the Manipur State Constitution Act 1947, it is found that Manipur did not have a responsible government in its true sense. A responsible government is one where the executive is fully responsible to legislature. But in this case, the Council of Ministers was collectively responsible to the Maharaja who was not elected. There was no provision for the members to move no-confidence motion against the Council

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185 Ibid, Chapter IX, Art.41(b).
186 Ibid, Chapter XI, Art.42.
187 Ibid, Chapter XI, Art.58.
as a whole. The Chief Minister and other ministers were also required to swear in the name of the Maharaja, his heirs and successors. This is another major feature which contradicts the principles of responsible government.

Besides, the king was not a titular or Constitutional head of the state. He had the power to appoint the Chief Minister, to interfere in allotting portfolios to Ministers, issue orders having the force of laws etc. Besides, the Council of Ministers was responsible to the king. 188

Another defect of the Constitution was the Maharaja could appoint anybody as Chief Minister. In democratic practice, the leader of the majority party in the Legislature was designated and appointed as Chief Minister. Therefore, the appointment of Chief Minister by the Maharaja was undemocratic. 189

Of course, the Maharaja had to consult the Council of Ministers at the time of appointment of the Chief Minister. But it was only a formal act, he could exercise discretionery power while selecting Chief Minister. In fact, Maharaja Bodhachandra selected his own younger brother M.K. Priyavarta as the first Chief Minister on 14 August 1947. So the king

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188 Ibid, Chapter III, Art. 12.

189 Ibid, Art. 10(c).
was the most dominant man in the political system of the state. That is why R.K. Jhalujit Singh says that 'The new Government was not responsible to the legislature, it was merely "responsive" a strong technicality invented by the Constitutional Pandits of the Maharaja'.

So the Manipur Constitution Act 1947 failed to provide a fully popular and democratic government. The Constitution was only an attempt on the part of the Maharaja to keep the people pacified and appeased by granting some democratic practices. Blackstonian idea that the king can do no wrong did not find place in the administrative set up contemplated under the Manipur Constitution Act 1947. This Constitution could not give satisfaction to the people of Manipur.

However, under provisions of the Constitution, the people had right to participate in the administration of the state. Art. 30 of the Constitution has given overriding powers to the Assembly so far law making is concerned.


191 Ibobi N., Elements of Public Administration in India, 1974, p. 256.

192 Bhagyabati Patrika, 22 March 1947.
The Constitution for the first time included fundamental rights and duties which were unknown to the Manipuri masses. Prior to the Constitution, the Manipuris could not enjoy fundamental rights but enjoyed only fundamental duties imposed by the Maharaja. Thus, the Constitution made a check upon the supreme powers of the king.

The Manipur Constitution of 1947 was a true reflection of the prevailing cross-currents of the then social, political and economic condition of Manipur. There could not be a people's constitution as Maharaja was considered as God's incarnation whose divinity could always be misused at the cost of peoples rights.

The Meiteis once used to seat and unseat their kings. Even the powerful Caribniuaj was removed from his throne for his extreme religious policies. The British guarantees to the throne of Manipuri Rajas made them despotic and sometimes oppressive to the people. Thus, under the provisions of the Constitution, the people started enjoying certain political rights and liberties. It also provided for an Assembly directly elected by the people with voting qualifications. The people by sending their representatives to the Assembly participated in the administrative affairs of the state. The water of the brook cannot be purer than
at its source. The Constitution suited the people of the then Manipur. It was, as it were, a political formula that served as a mirror of the political progress of the people.

CABINET MISSION AND MANIPUR

The Cabinet Mission published a Memorandum in regard to states, Treaties and Paramountcy on May 12, 1946. The Memorandum stated that the British Government could not and would not in any circumstances transfer Paramountcy to an Indian Government. It also declared that all powers taken by the British Government from the states should be restored to the states. So, it was clear that the states would not be compelled to join the Indian Dominion. This attitude of the British Government was resented by the Indian leaders but supported by the Princes. But at the same time, the Cabinet Mission did not contemplate that the states should become sovereign and independent on the termination of Paramountcy. It envisaged the voluntary accession of the states to the new Indian Dominion through negotiations and their participation in the work of the Constituent Assembly. The Memorandum suggested that the

States should enter into standstill agreements with the successor Governments continuing existing arrangements in all matters of common concern until fresh agreements could be concluded by negotiations.

The British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act 1947 on the 4th July. This Act came into force from 15th August 1947 and thus provided for termination of Paramountcy of the Crown over the Indian States and all treaties, agreements and all functions exercisable by His Majesty towards Indian States or their Rulers leased from the said date. In other words, states were to decide whether to remain in India or to join Pakistan. Thus, this Act restored statehood in Manipur.

After independence, the relationship between Manipur and Dominion Government of India was that of a federating unit and a federal government. A standstill Agreement was signed between Manipur and the Dominion Government. Under this agreement, Manipur acceded only in the three subjects of Foreign Relations, Defence and Communications without any financial liability.

PROBLEMS DURING TRANSITORY PERIOD

A tumultuous and an unstable period began in the political history of Manipur from 15 August 1947 and that lasted until 15 October 1949.

The Manipur Government faced lots of agitations. These agitations can be broadly divided into three groups (1) agitations which aimed to reform Manipur administration (2) agitations launched by Rizo and Ngami to secede from Manipur and (3) agitations launched by Congress, Socialists and Communist Parties.

AGITATIONS FOR THE ABOLITION OF PASSPORT SYSTEM

The first problem before the Interim Government was agitation launched by the Socialist Party to abolish passport system. This passport system checked the entry of foreigners in Manipur. The British Political Agent issued passport to foreigners who wanted to enter into Manipur. If a foreigner wanted to stay in Manipur for more than one week, he had to pay Rs.5 as tax. After independence, the Home Ministry issued passport.

Thirteen Socialists tried to violate the passport system by entering Manipur forcibly. On 25 September 1947, the Manipur State Council decided that the passport
issue must be decided by a Council of Minister who was responsible to the people.

**MIZO AGITATION**

Manipur Mizo Union agitated to secede those areas which were inhabited by Mizos to Mizo Hills. They boycotted the Assembly election. But the agitation came to an end with the arrest of some Mizo Union leaders.

**Ngamei Agitation**

In the later part of 1946 the Ngamei launched agitation under the leadership of Athiko Daiho. This agitation demanded that Mano Areas must be merged to Naga Hills. It lasted for about 2 years. A.Daiho and his followers challenged the Manipur Government by carrying out many unlawful acts. So, the Manipur government sent a police force to arrest A.Daiho on 28 August 1948.¹⁹⁵ There was a clash between the police party and the people who supported Daiho. Daiho with his three followers were arrested on 29 August 1948.¹⁹⁶ The police opened fire and four persons died. After this incident, the agitation came to an end.

¹⁹⁶  Ibid.
THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

In 1948, the Communist Party came into existence in Manipur under the leadership of H. Irabot Singh. On 21 September 1940, a great public meeting was arranged at M.D.U. Hall by Praja Sangha and Krishak Sabha against the movement for the formation of Puranchal. On this day, there was a clash between the people and the police force at Pungdongbam. On hearing this, Irabot went to Nambol on bicycle. The Manipur Government banned Praja Sangha, the Communist Party and Krishak Sabha and issued warrants to arrest Irabot and other leaders of the banned parties. Thus, Irabot and other important leaders went underground. The Manipur Government took up many repressive measures to suppress Irabot and his followers and arrested many workers of the banned parties. Thus, Communist revolution came to an end with the death of Irabot at Tangbo on 26 September 1951.

197 Shatradhari S., Manipuri Itihasta Irabot published by Manipur Krishak Sabha, 1972, p.63.

198 Ibid, p.68.

199 Irabot breathed his last while living underground at Tangbo in Burma by typhoid - Shatradhari Irabot, p.75.
AGITATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

While the task of Constitution making was in progress, the Maharaja formed an Interim Council to give effect to the contemplated constitutional changes in Manipur. The former Darbar was abolished on 1 July 1947 and the Manipur State Council was established. F.F. Pearson, the former Darbar President became the first Chief Minister of the Council and M.K. Priyobarta, Bashiruddin, E. Tompok and Krishnamohan became ministers. On August 1947, K.Courou was included in the Council as Minister. "Instrument of Accession was duly executed on 11.6.47 between the Governor-General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur". When it became clear that an Interim Government would be formed after the British had left India, political intrigues became active. Some members of the Manipur State Congress have decided not to join the Interim Government unless it was a fully responsible and popular government. But some members of


201 Manipur State Gazette, Part 1, 26 July 1947 Notification No.7 of 28.7.47 No.779-810(c) Edu.


203 Manipur State Gazette, 26 August 1947, No.418-20P.

II-1.
the Congress Party wanted to join the Interim Government. This led to the split of Congress into two factions (i) Congress led by Tompok and (ii) Congress led by Tomal. Thus, Congress began its infamous political career in Manipur.

By an order of the Maharaja, the members of the Council retired from service from 8 a.m. on the morning of 14 August 1947. An Interim Government was formed on 14 August 1947 under the Chief Ministership of M.K. Priyobarta. Four ministers were also appointed i.e. K. Goura (Education and Press), Basiruddin Ahmad (Jail, Medical and P.U.O.), S. Krishnamohan (Finance) and R.K. Bhubansana (Revenue).

All politically conscious people of Manipur wanted early introduction of the new Constitution. But the Maharaja had not given his assent to the Manipur Constitution. Manipur Hill People's Regulations and Manipur State Court's Act were already approved and implemented by the Maharaja. This delay was taken by the Congress Party as an attempt

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204 The Council of Orders from 1 July 1947 to 1949, The Council Notification No. 7 of 28.7.47, 778-810(c).

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid.
to perpetuate the rule of the Maharaja. So, the Congress was ready to launch satyagraha and published Bulletin No.1.
In the Bulletin, the President of the Manipur State Congress appealed to the people of Manipur to help the Congress in their satyagraha for introducing full responsible government. 207

The Congress resolved that Maharaja be requested to make an announcement very soon to the effect that full responsible government would be introduced within 1 April 1948. 208 If the Maharaja did not accept the demand, the Congress would take up a satyagraha andolon. In the absence of any reply from the Maharaja, the Congress Working Committee reiterated their Resolution No.10 of 4 October 1947 on 16 October 1947 and again requested the Maharaja to concede the demand. 209 A meeting of the Congress Working Committee was held on 18 October 1947. The meeting resolved that if they did not get a definite reply from the Maharaja by 31 October 1947, the Congress would launch satyagraha from 1 November. 210 A satyagraha

208 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
Council of Action was formed under the leadership of Elangbam Tompok Singh. But on 3rd November, girl students of Tamphasana Girls' High School launched a strike by closing Sanjenthong bridge to traffic. When the Congress Party started satyagraha on 6 November it was actually a civil disobedience movement.

One of the serious problems before the interim government was non-cooperation movement launched by Tompok Congress from 6th to 26th November 1947. This agitation was supported by Praja Sangha, Krishak Sabha, Mahila Sammeleni and Students Federation. On 6 November 1947, the Chief Minister appealed to the people of Manipur to keep peace and to give co-operation to the government of Manipur. On 7 November there was violent clash between the agitators and the police and Imphal Thana was seized by a mob. On 9 November 1947, Deveshwar Sarma the Dominion Agent sent a telegram to the Assam Governor about the agitation for responsible government and on 10 November 1947, he wrote a letter to the Maharaja.

211 Ibid.
212 Manipur State Gazette November 6, 1947, A.No.3122-4(c).
advising him to adopt British system of constitutional monarchy. On 9 November 1947, an appeal was made to the people by the Dominion Agent Debeshwar Sarma. On 23 November 1947, M.K. Priyobarta Singh, the Chief Minister of the Interim Government announced that "a full responsible government should be established in Manipur within six months. Thus 21 days old agitation for responsible government came to an end from 9 a.m. 26 November 1947. During this tumultuous period the Maharaja Budshechandra moved the British authorities for the restitution of the Kabow valley from Burma.

In April 1948, the Manipur State Election Rules 1946 was adopted. Elections programmes were announced and last date of filing nomination papers was fixed on 25 April and date of scrutiny on 19 May.

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214 Shyamkanhai, Ibid, p.78.
216 Ibid, op.4-5.
217 Petition of Budshechandra Maharaja to the Secretary of State for Burma in Council through His Excellency the Governor-General of India, Dated 15 October 1947 Palace.
218 Manipur State Gazette, Government of India Part I, Minutes of a Meeting of the Constitution Making Committee of 2.4.48 M.No.6464-7(c).
219 Ibid.
was divided into 29 constituencies. Hill areas were divided into 18 constituencies. According to the Manipur State Election Rules 1948 - a citizen of Manipur who had completed 25 years of age could be a candidate for election. Assembly members were to be elected for a period of 3 years and a person who attained 21 years of age on 1st March 1948 was eligible to be a voter. There was an Election Tribunal consisting of 3 Commissioners to decide election disputes. Accordingly, Assembly election was held in the valley on 29 June 1948 and 30 June 1948. Election in the hill took place on 26 and 27 July 1948. All political parties put up their candidates and the result of the first Assembly Election - 14 Congress, 5 Manipur Kishak Sabha, 3 Socialist Party, 16 from hills, 12 Praja Santi, 1 nominated member total 53. This election was the first election ever in Manipur on adult franchise. The members were sworn in on 18 October 1948. They swore allegiance to the Maharaja and his heirs. On 5th August the Constitution Making Committee was dissolved by an order of the Maharaja. For sometime,

220 N. Ibotombi, Congress and Manipur Statehood, p.6.

221 Shyamkhani, p.80.

222 Government of Manipur, Order by the Maharaja on 5th August 1948, No. 2922 of 1948.
no party could form ministry, as no party got absolute majority. So the Interim Council of Ministers continued as caretaker ministry. 223 Although Congress was the single largest party, it could not form government as it was not supported by other parties. The Praja Santi formed the Government with the help of Hills and Krishak Sabha members. M.K. Priyobarta became the Chief Minister and Major R. Khathing, Azambem Ibotomcha, Ningthoujam Dr. Leiren, Ayapkem Courbichou, Mr. Tebekilong and Md. Alimuuddin became ministers. 224 On 27 November, portfolios were allocated to the ministers by the Chief Minister.

1. A. Ibotomca  - Finance
2. Dr. N. Leiren  - Education and P.V.D.
3. A. Courbichou - Commerce and Industry
4. R. Khathing  - Hill Affairs
5. Teba Xilong  - Forest and Medical
6. Md. Alimuuddin - Jail and Revenue. 225

The ministers took over their respective portfolios on the afternoon of Monday, 29th November. 226 T.C. Tiyankham

223 Government of Manipur Order No. 38P of 1948 by the Maharaja on 19th October 1948.
224 Government of Manipur Order by the Maharaja on 19th November 1948 Order No. 40P of 1948.
226 Ibid.
was the Speaker and T. Bakul Singh, the Deputy Speaker of the Manipur State Legislative Assembly. The first Assembly session was inaugurated by the Maharaja on Monday 18 October 1948.

The result of the Assembly election gave a shock to the Manipur Congress Party. The merger of the Manipur State into the Indian Dominion would be very swift if the Congress formed the government. So, the Congress Party launched the non-cooperation movement. The Party boycotted Assembly session after attending budget session. The Party pressed the Maharaja to merge Manipur into the Indian Dominion unconditionally. Not only this, the party organised demonstrations demanding dissolution of the Manipur State Assembly and the Council of Ministers. Thus, Congress agitation made Manipur unstable.

One of the most important and urgent tasks which the Interim Government in Delhi, after India's independence, wished to accomplish was that of merging the princely states which were given choice of either to join either the Dominion of India or remain independent. For

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227 Government of Manipur Order by His Highness on 20 November 1948, Part Order No. 49 of 1948 Mean No. 54/LA of 19.11.49.

228 Ibotombi M., Congress and Manipur Statehood, p.6.
accomplishing this task in relation to Manipur, there was signing of the Instrument of Accession between the Maharaja and Dominion Government of India on 11.8.47. 229 But this was not enough. When the Dominion Agency, which replaced the political agency, was abolished in 12 June 1948, 230 the Government of Dominion of India naturally felt it unwise to entrust internal administration of Manipur entirely in the hands of the Manipur Government. So, it started devising plans to control internal administration of Manipur which would ultimately lead to the merging of Manipur into the Dominion of India and its first move to achieve this goal came in the form of asking the Maharaja for the creation of a post of Dawan in Manipur. Sir Akbar Hyderi, the then Governor of Assam wrote to the Maharaja.

"Another matter regarding which I must refer to you at this stage is the appointment of a Dawan with effect from such date as the popular Ministry takes office. The principal duty of your Dawan will be with respect to


the watching of treaty obligations as between the state and the Indian Dominion. Our relation with the state which were previously conducted through the Dominion Agent, and then, on the abolition of the Agency, through the Chief Minister, will, under the new political context, be conducted through your Dewan.”

At first, the Maharaja was not willing to accept the proposal of appointing the Chief Minister as also Dewan of the state, probably because he felt that the proposed Dewan would be the agent of the Indian Government. So, he replied - “Regarding the appointment of a Dewan in the state, it is in any way an Agent of your Excellency. But in my considered opinion, it is not desirable that the Dewan (Agent) should hold the office of a Chief Minister in addition.”

However, the Governor assured the Maharaja that the Dewan would not be an agent of the Indian Dominion but a servant of the state, appointed, mainly, to assist the Maharaja vis-à-vis the treaty obligations between the

231 Sir Akbar Hydari’s letter to the Maharaja Bodhchandra dated 2.6.48.

232 Maharaja’s D.1.No.281 p.1-1 dated 10.8.48 to the Governor of Assam.
state and the Indian Dominion. The Maharaja submitted to this coxing assurances and issued the following order: "In the reciprocal interest of the Dominion Government and the Manipur State Government, M.K. Captain Priyobarta Singh B.A. is appointed to carry on the duties of a Dewan with respect to watching the relations between the Manipur State and the Dominion Government in addition to his present duties as the Chief Minister of the Manipur State.".

The Maharaja sent a letter to the Governor informing him of the appointment of a Dewan as instructed by the Governor.

When Mr. M.K. Priyobarta Singh held the office of Dewan, Sir Akbar Hyderi gave a definite understanding that it was only to look after the relation between the two states. But this harmless office, however, turned overnight into a centre of power and intrigue when Major General

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233 Sir Akbar Hyderi's letter dated 14.8.48 to the Maharaja.

234 Order No. 466 of 1948 dated 29.11.48 by the Maharaja.

235 Letter No. 1031 p.1-1 dated 29.11.48 from Maharaja to the Governor of Assam.
Rewal Amer Singh succeeded M.K. Priyobarta as the Dewan from the forenoon of 18.4.49. 236

Such a change was brought by Sri Prakasa, the Governor of Assam who succeeded Sir Akbar Hydari after his sudden death. In March 1949 Assam Governor Sri Prakasa came to Manipur to persuade the Maharaja to appoint another person as Dewan of Manipur in place of Priyobarta Singh. He wanted to control the internal administration of Manipur as a prelude to merger. He wrote to the Maharaja: “During my last visit to Manipur, I had communicated to your Highness, the proposal of the Government of India to appoint a suitable officer nominated by the Government of India as Dewan for Manipur State with full powers over the whole range of administration. Government of India have now decided to appoint Rewal Amer Singh as the Dewan of Manipur State”. 237

The powers and functions of the Dewan were:

(a) The Administration of Manipur should be carried on under the general superintendence, guidance and control


of the Dewan. The Dewan should have the right either on his own initiative or on representations being made to him, to call for papers from any of the Minister in charge of any of the departments, and passed such orders as he might consider fit and proper, on them in consultation with the Minister concerned.

(b) The Dewan should hold direct charge of the portfolios of (1) law and order (2) administration of hill tracts (3) state forces and (4) relations with the Government of India.

(c) The distribution of portfolios among the Ministers should be confirmed by the Dewan. It was also assured that there was no question of merging Manipur to the Dominion of India and this would not affect to the integrity and entity of Manipur and Maharaja’s personal dignity and prestige.

The Maharaja accepted the proposition and issued an order. That order appointed Rajaal Amar Singh as the Dewan and assumed charge of the office of Dewan from the afternoon.

238 Letter dated 14.4.1949 from Sri Prakasa to Maharaja.
of the 18th April 1949. Soon, misunderstanding arose between the Maharaja and the Dewan, over the verdict of the Election Tribunal against Md. Alimuddin. Maharaja wanted to help Md. Alimuddin. But this was in conflict with the prestige of the Dewan and the matter reached Sri Prakasa. So, Maharaja requested for an interview with the Governor. Officially, however, it was meant 'for clarification of the pending cases and for exchange of views on administrative problems of the State'.

The request was a golden chance for the Dominion Government, because Dominion Government decided what was to be done with Manipur. The integration of Manipur became a must as the threat of Burmese communist was looming large over the North eastern horizon. The Governor Sri Prakasa and his adviser Hari Rustomji had discussed the matter of integration of Manipur with V. P. Menon in Delhi and with Siding Seider in Bombay.

240 Order No. 13D of 1949 dated 16.4.49 by the Maharaja of Manipur.

241 Manipur State Gazette, 16 September 1949 (Part II) Election case No. 3 of 1948-49.

242 Telegram dated 29.8.49 from Maharaja to Governor Sri Prakasa in Shillong.

243 A Press release by President of Manipur State Congress dated 5th June, 1949 giving reasons for merger with India.
The Sardar's asking to the Governor as to whether there was not a Brigadier in Shillong was a clear indicative of their designs.

The Governor and his advisers did not want to repeat history. So, Nari Rustomji came to Manipur to persuade the Maharaja to visit Shillong.

Maharaja Bodhachandra reached Shillong on 17.9.49. The Governor, who had earlier went to Delhi and Bombay also returned to Shillong on that very day. Therefore, the meeting which was fixed could not be held in the evening of that day. So, the Maharaja and the Governor met in the morning of 18.9.49. The Governor wasted no time in initiating the issue of merger to the Maharaja and further informed the Maharaja that he had been given definite instructions by the Minister of State and negotiations must be completed by the 20th September 1949.

But, the Maharaja did not want to discuss the matter further, so he wrote on the evening of 18 September to

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245 The Governor and his men were very afraid of Manipuris because of the massacre of five Englishmen by Manipuris in 1891. This information was supplied to me by my father Sri Gaijamen Dev Sharma, a strong Congress worker of that time.

246 Letter dated 10th September 1949 from the Governor to the Maharaja.
the Governor Sri Prakasa that "The subject matter under reference involves the fate of future Manipur. I have received a number of representations and resolutions from the people concerning this important matter". He further wrote "Now that the sovereignty of the state has been vested in the people, it would be in the fitness of things to hear the people's voice and learn sentiment so that the line of action may not in any case be unconditional."

Maharaja also wrote to the Governor that these points were what he had to repeat in the meeting of the next day at 9.30 a.m., which was proposed by the Governor. He also expressed his desire to return to Imphal by the next day itself after the meeting. But, as no reply came from the Governor, the Maharaja wrote again in the early morning of 19th September 1949 requesting the Governor to allow him go back to Imphal without meeting him again.

After receiving the urgent letter, the Governor wrote to the Maharaja to 'come at once in order that the matter may be finalised' and wrote to the Maharaja again.

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247 Letter dated on 18.9.49 from Maharaja to the Governor.

248 'Urgent' Letter dated 19.9.49 from the Maharaja to the Governor of Assam.
of the 'very strict instructions' from the Dominion Government that the negotiations must be completed before Maharaja left Shillong.  

Maharaja in his reply to Governor complained about the 'rather unkind and un-sympathetic' attitude of Dominion Government and he was not given enough time about the slightest indication of the subject matter to be discussed in Shillong. He further pointed out that if he was compelled to work independently of his people, his action would be quite unjustifiable. In reply, the Governor reminded Maharaja of the 'strictest orders of the Government of India to have the negotiations completed without further delay'. Further, the Governor wrote 'The Government of India have, throughout, dealt with your Highness directly, as the Ruler of the State and are not prepared to make any deviation at the present stage from the procedure hitherto followed. Your Highness may rest assured that the Government of India will take complete responsibility in the matter of meeting whatever objections may be raised by the people.

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249 Letter dated 19.9.49 from the Governor to the Maharaja.
250 Letter dated 19.9.49 from the Maharaja to the Governor.
of the state. That is the policy that the Government of India have followed in their dealings with other states of India, and that is the policy they have decided to follow in the case of Manipur. Your Highness need, therefore, have no apprehensions regarding reactions of the people to the negotiations that are now in progress.251 How the Maharaja realised the reality of the situation, Still he was reluctant. He wrote in the morning of 20th September 1949 that direct dealing with him was feasible when sovereignty was vested on him but, after the introduction of the State Constitution Act, the sovereignty and administration of the state had been shifted to the people.252 He also wrote that under Rule No.28(II) of the Manipur State Administration Rules that was in force then, he and the Council of Ministers had joint responsibility for such matter. He was only a constitutional head of a fully responsible government and the voice of the majority was his voice and was binding on him and not otherwise. He wrote "(1) If I have to finalise the matter it should be done jointly with the Council.

251 Letter dated 19.9.49 from the Governor to the Maharaja.
252 Letter dated 20.9.49 from the Maharaja to the Governor.
(2) In any major transactions like this, if not supported by the people's consent and sentiment, the relation between the people and myself is severed and consequently it amounts to having a Ruler without people's. 253

Further, he requested the Governor to point out these facts to the Indian Government.

Although he had expressed all these in writing, the Maharaja went to meet the Governor that very morning of 20th September as 'paying respect'. Here, one finds an important change in the decision of the king. The causes of this sudden change might be .......

(1) Suddenly, a rumour began to spread that if the Maharaja did not sign the merger agreement, a new king would be appointed in place of Maharaja Bodhachandra and the new king would sign the merger agreement.

(2) Merger of Manipur with India by hook or by crook was a decision already taken by the Dominion Government. So, if the Maharaja did not sign it peacefully, the Dominion Government would use force. Actually, the Assam Governor ordered the Dominion Reserve force stationed

253 Letter dated 20.9.49 from the Maharaja to the Governor.
in Manipur to remain in alertness to meet any eventuality.

(3) If Maharaja did not sign the Merger Agreement, he would lose the privy purse amount and if he signed Merger Agreement peacefully, the Maharaja could request to increase the amount of privy purse, already fixed by the Indian Government.

(4) Besides, according to the Merger Agreement, the king would lose only administrative powers and he would remain as the head of religion and custom as before. This was a special privilege given to Manipur Maharaja, which other native rulers could not enjoy.

Over and above, the king and his retinue were living as prisoners at Red narcis from 18th September (protected by guard) and they were not allowed to go outside or to contact outsiders.

After considering all these matters minutely, a great change came over to the decision of the Maharaja on the evening of 23th September and, by the end of 'paying respect' to the Governor, the Dominion Government

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254 Telegram sent by the Governor of Assam to Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon on 18th September 1949.

255 Ibid.
seemed to be confident of their success. Nari Rustomji, the Adviser to the Governor, wrote "If there is any further point which His Highness would like clarified in connection with discussions this morning, I shall be glad to be of assistance. . . . . . . . I trust that, in view of the position as it now stands, there will be no further difficulty in arriving at the final settlement." 256

In order to hasten the process, the Governor of Assam paid a visit to the Maharaja in the evening of that day. Here it may be mentioned that the Governor of Assam, Sri Prakash and the Maharaja of Manipur, Bodhachandra, were friends. In the last decade of Maharaja Churachand's reign, Bodhachandra offered a Miyang Hiren (boat) to Miten U (a special kind of tree) when his father Maharaja was out of Manipur. 257 It was a traditional custom for aspiring kings. Maharaja Churachand came to know it when he

256 'Immediate' D.O. No. 1578-1 dated 20.9.1949 from N.K. Rustomji to Gourahari Singh P.S. to the Maharaja.

257 According to Leimayum Gopal Sarma, former cook of the Maharaja Bodhachandra, Bodhachandra did not offer Miyang Hiren to Miten U. It was a story circulated by anti-Jubraj group.
returned to Manipur. So, he banished his son Bodhachandra to Benares. At Benares, Bodhachandra met Sri Prakasa and became friends. It is evident that Sri Prakasa had heart to heart talk with Bodhachandra without any aide regarding the Merger Agreement. Thus, the Governor succeeded to reach "happy conclusions" with the Maharaja about the main terms of the agreement. The Governor wrote after the meeting 'I am glad indeed that we have been able to arrive at happy conclusions to our discussions and I thank Your Highness 'co-operation and goodwill'.

Till the morning of 20th September i.e. before his visit to the Governor, he was against coming into any definite conclusion without the consent of the people, yet by the evening, after the visit 'happy conclusions' were arrived at, what actually transpired to arrive to a 'happy conclusion' will remain in mystery. It must have something to do with the extreme psychological

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258 At last, at a private meeting with the Governor, the Maharaja placed himself, without reserve, in the Governor's hands to do as he considered best in the interest of India, Manipur and the ruler Rustomji Hari Enchanted Frontier, p.109.

259 Letter of the Governor to Maharaja dated 20.9.49.
pressure out in him. The Maharaja had been given all possible concessions in matters like Privy purse i.e., the amount of the privy purse was increased from 2 lakhs and 25 thousand to 3 lakhs.

The Merger Agreement was signed in the afternoon of the 21st September 1949. There were nine Articles in the Merger Agreement. Out of this, seven Articles dealt exclusively with the interests of the Maharaja and his family.

**IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE MERGER AGREEMENT**

The preamble to the Merger Agreement declared that it was in "the best interest of the people of Manipur." The victory of Indian Government was epitomised in the 1st Article of the Agreement. It reads as follows "His Highness, the Maharaja of Manipur hereby cedes to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority; jurisdiction and powers for and in relation to the governance of the state and agrees to transfer the administration of the state to the Dominion Government.


on the fifteenth day of October 1949 further "The Dominion Government will be competent to exercise the said powers, authority and jurisdiction in such manner and through such agency as it may think fit". 262

Art.II further laid down that the Maharaja should continue to enjoy the same personal rights, privileges, dignities, titles, authority over religious observances, customs, usages, rites and ceremonies and institutions in charge of the same in the State, which he would have enjoyed had this agreement not been made. 263

Art.III laid down that the Maharaja would be entitled to receive for his life-time from the revenues of the State annually for his Privy Purse the sum of Rupees three lakhs free of all taxes. 264

Art.IV entitled the Maharaja full ownership, use and enjoyment of all his private properties. 265

Art.V entitled all the family members of the Maharaja, all personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them.

Art. VI dealt with Maharaja's successors to the gaddi or Manipur.

Art. VII protected the Maharaja from court proceedings for anything done by him during the period of his administration of the States. 266

VIII This provision is concerned with the people of Manipur. It laid down that the Government of India would undertake to make suitable provisions for the employment of Manipuris in the various branches of public services and in every way encourage Manipuris to join public services. The Government of India also undertook to preserve various laws, customs and conventions prevailing in the State pertaining to the social, economic and religious life of the people. 267

Art. IX laid down that except with the previous sanctions of the Government of India, no proceedings, civil or criminal, should be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of his duties as a servant of the State before the day on which the administration was made.

266 Ibid, p.234.
over to the Government of India. 268

The Merger Agreement was kept as a secret for sometime, on the request of the Maharaja. On 3rd October 1949, it was announced that the administration of Manipur would be taken over by the Dominion Government from 15 October 1949. 269 On this day, the Manipur Administrative Order 1949 was announced. 270 Under this Order, a Chief Commissioner was appointed by the Dominion Government and he should be in charge of Manipur administration. The first Chief Commissioner of Manipur was Major General Rawel Amer Singh. The Dominion Government dissolved Manipur Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers "from midday of Saturday the 15th October 1949". 271 Thus Manipur was merged to India.

The Merged States (Laws) Act of 1949 and other acts came into force in Manipur. 272 The administration of

268 Ibid, p.234.


270 Government of India Ministry of States Cited New Delhi, 15th October 1949.

271 Government of Manipur Orders by the Chief Commissioner No.0001/E.C. of 15 October 1949 (12 noon).

272 Government of Manipur, Manipur Gazette Extraordinary No.15-E-3 Imphal, Thursday, January 5, 1950. It was published in the Gazette of India 28 December 1949.
Manipur was conducted by a Chief Commissioner on behalf of the President of India. The Chief Commissioner was the head of administration and was assisted by a Secretariat with a Chief Secretary and six other secretaries and other ancillary officers.  

Manipur was treated as a single district and be placed under the charge of a Deputy Commissioner who will be responsible for the revenue and executive administration of the Province. The Deputy Commissioner shall also be the District Magistrate of the District and shall have all the powers conferred upon him under the Criminal Procedure Code and other laws.  

The district was sub-divided into eight sub-divisions. There was Sadar, Thoubal, Ukhrul, Churachandpur, Tamenglong, Mao, Tengnoupal and Jiribam.  

Part C states (Law) Act 1950 was extended to Manipur. The Representation of the People Rules, 1950 was extended in Manipur.  

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President of India constituted an Advisory Council in 1950 consisting of a Chief Commissioner and fourteen members, nominated by the Indian Government in consultation with the Chief Commissioner. On 9th October 1950, Chief Commissioner Himmat Singh inaugurated the first session of the Advisory Council in Secretariat Building, Imphal.

REACTIONS TO THE ISSUE FROM DIFFERENT QUARTERS OF MANIPUR

PRAJA SANTI

The Praja Santi was the ruling party during the critical period. It was also known as Nationalist Party because it expressed its opinion on the issue as follows:

'Manipur is to remain as a State and autonomous unit enjoying responsible government with His Highness, the Maharaja of Manipur as the constitutional head and with her sovereignty undisturbed'. The party holds the view that "Manipur State will have necessary relation with the Indian Union". The party informed to the Governor of

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280 Policy and Programmes of the Government and Party as presented by Dhabala Singh, President, Praja Santi to Maharaja as 17.12.48.

281 Ibid.
Assuming that almost one percent of the people of the state is quite against the integration or merging. Further, the party expressed its fear if Manipur was merged into India, it could not run parallel with their fellow Indians because of its backwardness. Besides, the party felt that the then existing relationship between Manipur and Dominion Government of India was most satisfactory and as the Manipuris were quite satisfied with it, there was no need for integration. Thus, Praja Santi was against the merger of Manipur into the Dominion of India.

THE MANIPUR STATE CONGRESS PARTY

The Congress Party was demanding merger of Manipur to the Dominion of India. It threatened to launch Satyagraha if Manipur was not merged into Dominion of India. The Congress complained to the Maharaja for oppressing the people in social and religious matters. The Manipur State Congress President in a press release on 6th June 1949 gives the following reasons for merger with India.

"(a) Manipur cannot maintain law and order.

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282 Memorandum dated 25.3.49 from the General Secretary of Praja Santi to the Governor of Assam.

283 Ibid.
(b) There is threat of Burmese Communist insurgency in Manipur.

(c) Manipur will have peace and prosperity only as a part of India. The Manipur Congress believed that the state will soon have popular government and administration in the lines of All India Congress policy of democratisation of states and people. 284

There was very few, if any, protests from the general public against a possible merger that was in the air during that period. The people were ignorant of significance of merger.

CONCLUSIONS

In the early part of the present century, all North East region was under the British suzerainty. The Brahmaputra and Surma valley came under the direct administration of the British. Regarding the Khasi Hills, the Jaintia Hills, the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills and N.E.F. areas, the British authorities adopted a different policy. They classified these areas from time to time into partly and fully excluded areas according economic viability.

284 The Manipur State Congress President's Press release on 6.6.1949.
Usually, the British Government did not interfere with the functioning of the indigenous governmental institutions. In case of Manipur and Tripura, they left internal administration in the hands of local kings. But the Tripuri Maharaja enjoyed more autonomy than the Manipuri Maharaja.

In Tripura, movement for responsible government started early in the first decade of this century. But in Manipur, this movement started comparatively late in 1934. In Tripura, the movement was marked by two distinct phases. The first phase was anti-British, not anti-Maharaja in nature. This was a terrorist movement and ended in the late thirties. The second phase was a mass movement, demanding full responsible government, although it initially started for agrarian reforms. The second phase ultimately lost its local enthusiasm and merged itself into a wider national struggle till the state was merged with Indian Union. From the very beginning, movement for responsible government in Tripura was influenced by Bengal freedom fighters. One important drawback of the first phase of responsible movement in Tripura was that there were too many parties and these parties did not co-operate with one another. So, they could not stand united against the Maharaja's repressive measures.
In Manipur, demand for responsible form of government was started by Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha in its Chingnaa session of 1938. An unstable period began in the political history of Manipur from 15 August 1947 to 15 October 1949. During this period, Manipur Government faced lots of agitations i.e. Ngami and Mizo agitations to secede from Manipur, agitation launched by the Congress party for introducing responsible government, the Socialist Party's agitation for lifting Inner Line Permit from Manipur and the Communist revolutionary movement of international character.

In Tripura and Manipur, the Congress parties were formed very late in 1946. But the Congress wave could not enter in hilly areas of North East. In Tripura and Manipur, the Congress parties pressed their Maharajahs to merge into the Indian dominion.

On 15 August 1947, India emerged from the position of a colonial country to that of an independent country. The country which was one geographical entity was divided into two - India and Pakistan. The British government had announced that the Indian Independence Act released the native states from all their obligations to the crown. The native states had complete freedom - technically and
legally they were independent.\textsuperscript{285} So, the Indian Government signed Instrument of Accession with native states of Tripura and Manipur, \textit{khadi} states.

One of the challenging political problems that faced the States Ministry was integration of native states, partly excluded and fully excluded areas, scattered in the northeastern part of India. The accession of states was only a partial solution of the problem that confronted the states after the transfer of power. For integration of the states into the new polity the instrument of merger was deemed necessary to negotiate with rulers of states.

The Maharaja of Tripura Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, being an enlightened ruler, had always kept a close eye upon India's freedom movement. When the transfer of power became a certainty, he did not hesitate to express his decision in favour of joining Indian Union unlike the Maharaja of Manipur. Because, he could foresee changes that might take place in the native states of India with India's independence. But he could not see the dawn of independence. After his death, the Regent Maharani went

\textsuperscript{285} Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten's Statement at the Conference of the Rulers and Representatives held at 3.30 p.m. in the Chamber of Princes on Friday 25 July 1947, Appendix VI of White Papers on Indian Status, p.161.
to Delhi with his father Maharaja of Pahna and discussed about the Merger Agreement with V. P. Menon. The position of the ruler of Tripura was peculiar. He was both a British Indian Zamindar of Chakla Roshebad and a ruling prince of hill territory known as 'Independent Tripuresh'. Keeping apart the Zamindari, the Regent Maharani signed Merger Agreement of Tripura with the Indian Union on 9 September, 1949 in a subservient atmosphere. The Indian Government did not face any opposition both from the Regent as well as the people of Tripura while signing the Merger Agreement and with it Tripura ceased to be a princely state from 15 October 1949. By the second week of September 1949 only Manipur was left out. It may be mentioned that Manipur was the last state to be conquered by the British and also the last state to be merged to India. So, problem of national integration will take time.

Maharaja Bodhachandra was "a person of weak character". So, he could not foresee changes that might happen after India's independence. He wanted Manipur to remain as an autonomous unit of India enjoying responsible government with His Highness as constitutional head. The Maharaja

Menon V. P., The Story of Integration, p.302.
did not contemplate complete independence of Manipur. He had already signed Instrument of Accession two days earlier than Tripuri Maharani. The Maharaja went to Shillong to meet the Governor to discuss administrative problems of the State. Instead of discussing administrative problems of Manipur, the Maharaja had to sign the Merger Agreement on 21 September 1949.

Throughout the negotiation process of Merger Agreement, one finds lack of spirit of rebelliousness and of political acumen from the side of the Maharaja, particularly during the time of appointing Mr. R. Amur Singh as the Dewan. Maharaja submitted meekly and disgracefully to the undemocratic proposition of the Assam Governor which made the Dewan the most dominant man in the political system of Manipur. The present author finds the weak nature of the Maharaja in relation to the Governor Sri Prakasa and Nari Rustooji. It encouraged the Dominion Government to dictate terms to which the Maharaja meekly submitted. The present author also finds the Maharaja's lack of decisiveness during negotiations in Shillong on the eve of signing of merger agreement. On 18 September 1949 Maharaja expressed his unwillingness to sign the Merger Agreement without the consent of his people. But at the
same time, he requested the Governor to increase the amount of Privy Purse from proposed two lakhs and twentyfive thousand per year to Rupees four lakhs per year. It is an irony of fate to find the Maharaja talking about the consent of the people, the Constitution or the Legislative Assembly at Shillong. He should have raised these arguments at the time of appointing Mr. R. Amar Singh as the Dewan. At this hour, he should have raised important points for posterity and desired relation with new Indian Constitution. Besides, it was always the Dominion Government that was making propositions and the Maharaja weekly submitted himself without much protection. It was also a mistake on the part of the Maharaja not to ask the continuation of the Legislative Assembly of 1948 at the time of Merger Agreement.

There were poor performance of Manipur Legislative Assembly and its Council of Ministers. The Assembly failed to raise even a murmur of protest against the naked

187 Letter dated 10 September 1949 from the Maharaja to the Assam Governor.

188 Rustamji Meri, Enchanted Frontiers - "The Maharaja himself was a person of weak character, circled by a coterie of flatterers.....", p.90.
aggression of its powers and functions when Mr.Amar Singh became the Dewan. None of them also bothered to question the significance of the Merger Agreement. The Council of Ministers was worse than Legislative Assembly. Shagyabati Patrika published on 13th September 1949, that Maharaja was leaving Imphal for Shillong to discuss matters relating to the future of Manipur State, the Speaker wrote to the Private Secretary of the Maharaja proposing to call the Assembly to discuss the matter. The Council of Ministers was silent. Not only this, after signing the Merger Agreement, the Council of Ministers did not bother to call general session of the Assembly. If the Maharaja had previous knowledge of the Merger Agreement, he should have discussed the matter thoroughly with some constitutional experts.

Another peculiar aspect was the double standard tactics of Indian Government. On one occasion, the Dominion Government advised the Maharaja to follow "the path of a constitutional ruler" and on another occasion, advised him not to "give cause to a feeling that the provisions of the constitution are being violated or

189 Memo No.572 Legislative Assembly dated on 14.9.49 from T.C. Tienshong, Speaker.
anything done arbitrarily". But the Dominion Government refused to recognise the Constitution of Manipur, when they appointed Mr. N. Amar Singh as the Dewan of Manipur. Again it was also the same Dominion Government that pressed the Maharaja to sign the Merger Agreement by saying that "the Government of India, throughout dealt with the Maharaja directly, as the Ruler of the State and was not prepared to make any deviation at the present stage from the procedure hitherto followed and it will be their complete responsibility in matters of meeting whatever objections may be raised by the people of the state."

Such double standard tactics can only be satisfactorily interpreted as an action on the part of the Indian Government to by-pass the people of Manipur and their elected representatives in the state.

An atmosphere of secrecy seemed to surround the negotiations. The Governor declined to give any information to the Press representatives regarding negotiations.

Besides, the treating of the Maharaja like a captive or an interned person with armed guards (protecting guard),

191 Governor's letter to the Maharaja on 19.9.49.
refusal of the Governor to consider the voice of the people in spite of repeated reminders by the Maharaja were also clear indicative of the fact that the atmosphere under which the agreement was signed was not, to say the least, a commendable one for the signing of an agreement like that. The Merger Agreement was the victory of India won by dubious means whereas it was a terrible blow to the pride and self-respect of the people of Manipur. It was a dictated merger.

The changes brought by Merger Agreement in the political history of Manipur requires careful analysis. The Government of India had not explained clearly why a democratically elected form of government should be dissolved and substituted by an autocratic rule of one bureaucrat namely the Chief Commissioner.

The dissolution of democratic institutions which were the fruits of the people's hard work, dissatisfied the people of Manipur. Naturally, they immediately started demanding their rights for self-government, popular assembly and full responsible government which in turn marked the beginning of statehood movement in Manipur.

As Manipur had been a sovereign state from time immemorial with a type of people ethnically, culturally
and linguistically distinct from other people of India, she should have been listed among the states with some necessary safeguards by recommending proper amendments of the constitution.

In the case of Manipur, the Government of India had implemented all articles of Merger Agreement except Art.VII(3). Here, the Indian Government made a discrimination between Manipuris of hill areas and Manipuris of plain areas while implementing Art.VIII(3) of Merger Agreement. The Indian Government implemented Art.VIII(3) in the case of hill areas by the enforcement of Art.335 of the Indian Constitution giving service reservation facilities. Therefore, there has been no unemployment problem among the educated Manipuris in the hill areas of Manipur. But as a result of non-implementation of Art.VIII(3) during the last forty years and subsequent non-enforcement of Art.335 of the Indian Constitution in the case of Manipuris of the Valley areas, a gross injustice has been inflicted upon Manipuris of the Valley. Therefore there had been mounting unemployment problem among the educated and uneducated Manipuris. Some constitutional safeguards must be provided in Indian Constitution protecting legitimate interests of the
inhabitants of Manipur as in Telengana and Jammu and Kashmir if the Government of India is to be true to its promise. Art.11 provides for perpetual recognition of the Maharaja's authority over Sansamhi religious observances, customs, usages and rites. No Hindu Indian Maharaja has been this privilege in any merger agreement. Protection of minorities is one of the main objects of the Indian Constitution. Protection of North Eastern minorities, both politically and constitutionally are vague and confusing.

There were four merger agreements i.e. agreement with Khasi-Jaintia States, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland. Among these merger agreements, merger agreements with Khasi-Jaintia and Tripura were signed in a peaceful atmosphere. But, merger agreement with Nagaland was signed after a series of discussions. Before independence, the Naga leaders called to fight for independence and form an independent state without joining India. The Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee on Tribal Areas failed to convince Nagas to join Indian Union. Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam came to Kohima to impress upon the Nagas to understand the realities of the situation and after several discussions concluded a nine-point
agreement with the Naga leaders. But very soon, conflict arose regarding the interpretation of the nine point of agreement. So, the extremists under the leadership of A.J.Phizo declared the agreement invalid and started violent agitation demanding an independent Nagaland.

Unlike Manipuri and Tripuri Maharajas, the Syias of Khasi Hills did not take privy purses from the Government of India. In the opinion of the present author, the Khasi Syias were more considerate for their people than Manipur and Tripura Maharajas.

Thus, as a result of application of various merger agreements and integrated schemes, petty kingdoms, hilly states, impassable mountains and impenetrable jungles of this region come under one entity. The accession of the Indian native states to the Dominion of India was the first phase of the process of fitting them into the constitutional structure of India. The second phase which rapidly followed involved a process of two-fold integration, the consolidation of states into sizeable administrative units and their democratisation. 192 So, integration was of three-fold processes i.e. (1) the process of fitting

states into the constitutional structure of India
(II) constitution of states into administrative units
(III) democratisation of states. 193

Integration of states did not follow a uniform pattern
in all cases. Geographical contiguity was one step towards
integration, the second step was the conversion of states
into centrally administered areas and the third step was
the integration of small states to create a new viable
unit. 194 Each of these forms had been adopted according
to size, geography and other factors relating to each
state or group of states. The first category had been
adopted in the case of the Khasi-Jaintia states. The
second category had been applied in the case of Manipur
and Tripura. In the case of these two native states, there
were strategic considerations necessitating their
administration run directly by the centre rather than
their merger with provinces and states adjacent to them. 195
Manipur and Tripura were placed as Part 'C' states when
the Indian Constitution came into existence.

193 Ibid.
In North East region, responsible government was unknown except in Assam and Manipur. There was striking contrast between the conditions of Assam and other areas of North East region. At the time of transfer of power, Assam administration had reached a high standard of efficiency. There was uniform system of law, an organised judiciary, highly developed land revenue administration. On the other hand, in other parts of North East region this was not so. In Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland, only a skeleton administration was set up probably taking it to be sufficient for controlling the tribes and sustaining the British overlordship over the areas. Because, the frontier tribes were politically unconscious and educationally in a preliterate stage. After independence, the policy of the this region took a new turn aiming at reclamation of the tribals to the level of their brethren in plain areas. The reason for the introduction of such a special type of administration was the backwardness in respect of economic, literacy etc of the area.

It is the speciality of North East region that the protection of indigenous distinct culture and customs of the people was a mutually accepted condition in the negotiated merger agreements of Naga Hills, Khosi Hills and Manipur. It is a special deviation from other merger
agreements with Indian native states. Sir Akber Hyderi conceded a large measure of autonomy to the Nagas from all Indis laws and administrative norms to protect their religion, customs and self-governance by District Council of Nages.

The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution enumerates in detail the administrative set up of all hill districts of Assam in which hillmen live by themselves in their own territories, who have their own language and culture. The Sixth Schedule provided autonomy for the tribal areas of this region of their own distinct culture and at the same time to maintain unity and integrity of India. Thus, this provision not partially the Negas and the Khasis demand for autonomy in cultural, customary laws, religious and economic matters.

Article 362 provides that in the exercise of their legislative and executive authority, the legislature and executive of the states would give due regard to these guarantees. Succession to the gaddi must also receive recognition of the President. Article 363 specifically

196 Constituent Assembly Debates Vol.XI, p.710.
excludes the conventions and merger agreements from the jurisdiction of the Court, except in cases which may be referred to the Supreme Court by the President.

The Communist international movement in North East region in the 1940's had a great impact on the Congress leaders. The Communist infiltration was mostly in plain areas of North East region but it brought a great set back in the developmental progress of this area. In general integration brought peace and order in this region. In Manipur, Tripura and Assam, the Communist rebellions were suppressed.

After the birth of two Cominions, there were communal holocaust in which several millions of people were uprooted. It is amazing that in contrast with the rest of India, there was no serious religious and communal conflict in this region until India's independence.

Merger agreements laid the foundation for an integrated administrative and financial structure. But the real integration had to take place in the minds of the people. This could not be accomplished overnight. It would take sometime for the people of the erstwhile native states to outgrow their regional loyalties and to develop a wider outlook and broader vision. With the new concept of secularism and democracy, norms of integration is widening.