Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

The main objective of the present study is to find out the socio-economic, religious and political background of the political elites in Manipur, their role, role perception and performance vis-a-vis crucial issues of the state. All these aspects have been discussed and examined empirically in the preceding chapters with supporting field data. The concluding chapter is an attempt to present the main points of the study in the form of findings.

Manipur is politically at par with other states with a unicameral Assembly of sixty seats. The State Assembly is empowered to frame laws for the administration and governance of the state. The state is being ruled by a group of elected political elites. They were/are elected by the people as their representatives so that they work for the welfare of the state and its people. They constitute a minority group but exercise immense power in the society (c.f. chapter 1). They emerge out of the masses and rule with tacit and general approach of the masses. They have an inevitable and irrepressible urge to come to power and motivated by this urge to play an active role in politics. The memberships of political elites are open to all the people and there is alteration of political elites from time to time. Political elites are the representatives of the people and they are/were members of either State Legislative Assembly or parliament at one time or other or defeated candidates who aspired to get elected.

Manipur has its own long history since 33 A.D. It was during the reign of Nongda Laien Pakhangba (33 AD – 154 AD) that many reforms were introduced which laid the foundation of social and political structure as well as the cultural and religious pattern of the Meeteis. The kings or rulers of Manipur were the descendant of Nongda Laien Pakhangba in his male line (c.f. Chapter 2). The rulers that ruled Manipur from 33.AD to 1947 were neither representatives of the people nor responsible to the people. They were mostly concerned with the maintenance of the security of the kingdom. As Manipur
society prior to the introduction of democratic institutions was feudal in character, it was only the king and the nobility that exercised autocratic power. The king was the final appellate judge and he could interfere at any time in any case in which he was interested. There had been the involvement of the British officials in the administration of Manipur. In 1819, Manipur lost her independence and it was under the Burmese suzerainty for seven years. It was only by the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 that Manipur was liberated from the clutches of the Burmese but only to be controlled by the British. In 1835, Captain Gordon was appointed as the Political Agent of Manipur to advice and regulates the conduct of administration of the king. Manipur lost her sovereignty in her last war of independence against the British in 1891. Since then, there had been consequent political development like emergence of educated elite class, establishment of political party, demand for the introduction of fully responsible government, enactment of Manipur Constitution Act, 1947 and conduct of assembly election in 1948 on the basis of adult franchise, formation of representative government and merger of Manipur into India in 1949. Thus, the emergence of a class of political elites in modern democratic term is a new phenomenon in Manipur. It is the product of the democratic values and principles that paved the way for the emergence of the first batch of educated elite groups in the state.

An analysis of the political elite structure in Manipur indicates that political elites belonging to general social category have dominance in Manipur politics followed by those who belong to scheduled tribe category, minority community (Muslim) and scheduled caste category. However, becoming a leader in the elite structure is not at all related to one’s belonging to a particular social category or other. Manipur has had Chief Ministers not only from the general category but also from scheduled tribe and minority community.

It is ascertained from the study that the preponderant majority of the political elites in Manipur are male (cf. chapter 3). Women have been heavily under-represented in the elite structure although women constitute almost 50% of the total population of Manipur. Specific decisions have to be taken to end gender disparity and empower women after inviting opinions from all quarters. It is to ensure that women have equal access to basic
infrastructure, health, education and strengthen women’s cause to the grass root level. An important component of the study of elite structure, i.e. the socio-economic and cultural barriers and consciousness among women as the reasons for least representation of women, is not covered by the present study in spite of the fact that women in Manipuri society play crucial role in socio-economic processes. This calls for a separate study to find out the reasons that led to the failure of women in Manipur in striving to share power or influence the distribution of power. It is also brought out in the study that majority of the political elites also belong to rural social background, older age group and follow Hinduism. But the changing trend in the political elite structure in the last few decades indicates that the electorates have preferred political elites of younger generation. Income or economic status and educational status of the political elites play a significant role in climbing the ladder to the political elite structure of the state. It is also ascertained that majority of the political elites were teachers before they joined politics and more persons having professional background have been opting for politics in the state. Majority of the political elites, though born and brought up in rural areas, got their education from urban areas. Lack of enough number of institutions for professional courses and higher study in the state compelled the political elites to pursue their educational endevour outside the state. The findings on the reasons that led political elites entry into politics indicates that majority of them (65%) entered politics to serve public interest. This is purely on the basis of what they have stated in the personal interviews conducted and can be termed as mere lip-service. It stands in sharp contrast to the real state of affairs prevailing in Manipur. Even after 63 years of its merger into Indian Union, Manipur today is perhaps the only state in the country where general public have no access to regular supply of potable drinking water, electricity and good transportation. Had the political elites done a little, if not more, for the public welfare in the last two/three decades Manipur would not have been what it is today. A failed state! A state with more than thirty underground outfits! A free-for-all state! The second reason which determined their entry into politics is their personal determination or interest to enter politics while the third reason happened to be family/kinship/friend’s interest. Only 5 percent entered politics under the influence of political leaders followed by 3 percent under the influence of mass-movement.
A systematic examination of political background of the respondents show that 57 percent of them have literate parents and 53 percent considered their parental education as an important contributory factor in their socialization. The analysis of parent’s involvement or interest in politics indicates that parents of 73 percent of the political elites did/do not have political involvement or interest in politics and parents of 62 percent did not exercise influence in the political affairs of the political elites. All these findings are highlighted in table 3.8 of chapter 3. The political socialization of political elites is more through active participation in political activities and political discussions at home as well as along with friends. All the political elites are exposed to news items on politics in the local newspapers, 97 percent in national newspapers, 93 percent read various books, biography and autobiography while 99 percent read magazines/journals to get knowledge, particularly political knowledge. Thus, newspapers serve the political elites as a major agent of political socialization. All these findings are reflected in table 3.14 of chapter 3. However, it is unfortunate that political elites in Manipur do not use the knowledge that they have at their disposal in the formulation of policies and programmes which affect the society as a whole. Rather, they used the knowledge to develop a kind of personal dynamism, an ability to inspire trust in their integrity and confidence in their ability to perform. They are more concerned with their political survival and the urge and ability to be in the position of power define their successful political career. The grammar of political elites is ‘statecraft’ and they must demonstrate to the people that they have a grasp of political reality in the state and are capable of performing concrete political tasks. Legislation is within the control of political elites which is intellectually challenging and problematic. It is the area of political knowledge that most attracts the attention of non-politicians because it involves fundamental question of justice and power.

The analysis of political elite’s party affiliation and defection (cf. chapter 3) revealed that majority of the political elites belong to different national political parties and only a few belong to regional political parties. There are political elites in the state who work for regional interests as a means to climb the ladder to the elite structure and some regional political parties formed government in the state at one point of time or another. But political elites representing regional parties could not retain the confidence that people
have from them and consequently regional political parties are experiencing the loss of importance in the political drama of the state. The common practice found in the state is that most of the political elites wish to enter the electoral fray in the ticket of a party or parties which is or are in power in the state and the centre and go by abiding the instructions of the central leaders. They often used an excuse of not performing their representative role which they are supposed to perform in the interest of the state and its people by stating that the proposal is not approved by central leaders. This trend clearly indicates that political elites in the state have a dependency attitude.

It is also found that only 39 percent of the political elites do not change their party affiliation while 61 percent have changed their party affiliation from one party to another. The frequency of change in party affiliation or defection of the political elites ranges from one to five or more times. Politics in Manipur has been characterized by the politics of defection, re-defection, coalition and counter-coalition resulting in political instability in the state. This kind of politics is associated with the lack of development, ethnic divide and mockery of democracy and frequent imposition of the Presidential Rule in the state. From 1972 to 2001, the Presidential Rule has been imposed seven times in the state. Formation of jumbo size ministry had been used as a means by the political elites in the state to continue in the position of power and there is stiff competition for ministerial post among them. The study also revealed that majority of political elites (93%) considered party sponsorship as essential for electoral success while 7 percent did not think the same. Any new political party formed at the national level, be it Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Trinamool Congress (TC) etc, also come up in the state with a set of political elites and engaged in electoral politics with the sole aim of getting into power position. Any political party with a set of politicians may come in power but what the people prefer in the state is a stable government which can provide them justice, peace and development.

The examination of political aspiration of the political elite show that majority of the respondents are looking forward to a better future and want to climb up the staircase of power. Majority of them (60%) also wanted to serve the people and considered it as their career goal, 34 percent serving the constituency, state and nation and 6 percent considered establishing an egalitarian society as their career goal. However, it is
unfortunate for the state and its people that there are certain terms which have been used to describe the tenure of every government in Manipur. From 1990s till 2001, terms such as ‘overdraft’, ‘unpaid salaries’ of the government employees etc became synonymous with the government. It is now the turn of the people to use such terms as ‘percentage cuts’, ‘playing favourites’, ‘fake-encounter’, ‘buying of jobs’ at exorbitant price etc. In recent years, especially after 2005, some very disturbing terms such as ‘Nagalim’, ‘Kuki Homeland’, ‘Meetei government’, ‘economic blockade’ and ‘alternative arrangement of the Nagas living in Manipur’ etc have altered the vocabulary of the people in the state. The prevalence and practice of nepotism is a part of political culture of the state and is very common among the administrators, bureaucrats and political leaders. Family consideration, kinship ties, friendship obligations, ethnic and parochial loyalties get precedence in public servant’s mind and commitment to rules, regulations, laws, values and ideals become secondary. People also expect favours from their relatives who happened to assume public offices. Such practices damage activism and enthusiasm of the really talented people who are discriminated against to favour somebody. There is also nexus between gangsters and politicians. The gangsters often employ some practical techniques such as falsification, substitutes of ballots, kidnapping of workers of other parties and even murder etc to further the cause of their political ally at the time of election because the success of politicians at the polls is an important concern to them as their future and continued enjoyment of special privileges depend upon their success. They are not concerned with the means, whether they are within the laws or not, but are more concerned with getting things done.

It is also ascertained that political elites suggested some personal qualities/skills or talent, educational and political qualifications as desirable and necessary for a career in politics. The preference of those qualities and qualifications as stated by the political elites is reflected in table 3.14 of chapter 3. It is true that something within the individual is the key to become a political leader or elite. It may perhaps be a perceptive or receptive ability to be the right thing at the right time. Personality, character and experience may all play a part in making a career in politics but it is the manifestation of individual’s discretion and choice which ensures that the outcome of his decisions are the correct ones and it is the true barometer of their political leadership. Political elites are the
representatives of the people and if they get elected, they are engaged in legislation or law making and administration. They have to deal with bureaucrats and all sorts of ingredients of administration. A political leader needs to be at least a graduate in the 21st century. If an illiterate political leader leads and guides the public, there will be a very regrettable situation. Important issues are discussed in the Parliament and State Assembly, constitutional provisions are amended to suit the dynamic nature of society and new laws are made. Therefore, a political candidate must be educated and knowledgeable. There are recruitment rules with prescribed qualifications for appointing chawkidars/ care takers of a public institution but there are no such rules prescribing educational qualification for entering into politics and contest election. This fact sometimes makes mockery of democracy in Indian politics. If people with selfish interest and without the knowledge of governance joined electoral politics and get elected, there will be no good governance at all. Here, electorates have to play an important role in electing their representatives. It was earlier said that if the King is good, the people are also good but now it is such that if people are bad, the king is also bad. Indeed, people got the government they deserve. It is true that people have lost some respect for the men and women in public life. But people should not express their anger and dissatisfaction on ethnic and communal line. Collective anger can usher in change in the political arena and strengthen democracy by expressing their anger and dissatisfaction by democratic means particularly at the time of election.

Political elites need to be persons reputed for integrity, straight forwardness, discipline, work ethic and decisiveness in governance. They must be darling of the common people and take decision at the right moment. They must be truly patriotic and interact with people from all walks of life – people in politics and outside politics, from rank to file in the administrative set up and be guardian of the people. History created political elites and they in turn must create history. It is mostly people in distress who actually need the true service of the political elites who need to prove a point to the people that they can provide clean and efficient administration. Political elites/leaders should not make tall promises. They need to make people feel that somebody is looking at them and trying to do the best. Even if they did not succeed in bringing fundamental constructive changes in the society, they should take people into confidence and tell them
why they have not succeeded in certain spheres. But this must not be allowed to become a rationale or excuse for doing little. Political elites would be failing people if they do not take the fullest advantage of space and opportunities available in the changing political environment. They need to advance the interests of the common people, provide relief to them and educate them to uphold the cause of democracy, secularism, promote industrial development and take up the effects of the past neglect and discrimination.

As reflected in table 5.6 of chapter 5, the analysis of interactional patterns of the political elites at various levels indicates that the overall interactional linkage of the elites has been high. Majority of the political elites have interaction with other elites, both tribal and non-tribal, across party boundary mostly on local issues. Only a few have interaction on regional and national issues. This, in a way, indicates that the political elites in Manipur are less significant in dealing with the regional and national issues. The vertical interactional linkage of the political elites is found to be high in case of interaction with the Chief Minister, state ministers and central ministers while a significant percentage of political elites have interaction with different Prime Ministers of India at different points of time. They interact with the high ups mostly on state issues. Further, the interaction of the elites with government officials at the block level is higher than the district and state or national level officials. It is also found that majority of the political elites (69%) considered the expectation of the people from them as “high” while 31 percent considered that people have “very high” expectation from them. The study further revealed that 32 percent of the political elites used the technique of dealing with the people/public with open and honest mind to satisfy them, 26 percent create understanding with the people by explaining what is possible or not, 24 percent fulfill the demands of the people as far as possible, 15 percent frequent contact with the people while 3 percent did not reveal the technique used by them. With regard to the real role orientation indicating the area of focus of the political elites, it is ascertained that 70 percent of the political elites take decision by emphasizing the interests of constituency and state, 22 percent on state and 8 percent on constituency. Thus, political elites in Manipur are more oriented towards constituency and state in their role perception.
People can have “high” or “very high” expectations from the political elites. But they also need to know the role and duty of the citizen as well as the role and limitations of the political elites. Problem arises when people make high expectation by forgetting their role and duty. People need to give support to political elites in their honest endeavour to bring development of the state. They should not be guided by narrow self interest while highlighting their expectations to the political elites. There may be gap between the expectation of the people and the ability of the political elites to fulfill the expectation. It is unfair to think that everything is to be done by the political elites. Political elites as representatives of the people must try at their best level to accomplish the reasonable and rightful expectations of the people. What is more important is the desire on the part of the political elites to do something for the welfare of the people. They should not do anything and everything just to please the people. They should make policy and programmes to provide the people good shelter, basic necessities of life and protect them from unwanted artificial oppression from the state and state forces. Political elites should see into that their role performance serves the general interest but not self interest of the people because a man who tries to satisfy all pleases none. It is a must to bring and promote political awareness among the people.

An analysis of the issue orientation of the political elites revealed many important features. All the political elites welcome the introduction of Panchayati Raj while 74 percent support the provision of reservation of seats for women in state assembly and parliament and 73 percent support the idea of making voting compulsory. It is also found that majority of the political elites (52%) considered both economic and political factors as the causal factors of insurgency problem in the state, 26 percent economic factor and 22 percent considered political factor as the causal factor of the problem. Majority of the political elites (72%) suggested political dialogue with the insurgent groups as the measure to bring an amicable solution to the problem. The political elites also consider the issue of HIV/AIDS in the state as a serious problem and majority of them (70%) suggested spreading of awareness about the problem as the measure to control the problem, 14 percent for sincere implementation of the HIV/AIDS programmes, 10 percent for active role of political elites in the fight against HIV/AIDS, 4 percent suggesting that one should not hide it and 2 percent suggested formulation of strict laws.
to punish HIV/AIDS affected persons. The analysis of data with regard to controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)-1958 revealed that majority of the political elites (64%) stand against the Act and want to repeal it, 30 percent stand in favour of it while 6 percent want modification of the Act to make it more humane. Majority of them considered that the Act has affected Manipur severely and various controversies have been associated with this Act. The present study revealed only the political elite’s view on the Act and therefore one more area for further study could be the impact of the AFSPA-1958 in the state of Manipur. It is also found that majority of the political elites (88%) considered that there is no good governance in the state while 12 percent hold that there is good governance in the state. The study revealed that 42 percent of the political elites suggested transparency and accountability in administration of the state as the measure for good governance, 30 percent good and dynamic political leader and bureaucrat, 16 percent political dialogue with insurgent groups, maintaining good law and order and socio-economic development while 12 percent suggested good and responsible public as the measures for good governance in the state.

The analysis of political elite’s view on the territorial integrity of Manipur revealed that 85 percent of them considered that there are some factors like demand for Greater Nagaland and Kuki Homeland, divisive policy of some leaders, insurgency problem threatening the ideal of integrity in the state while 15 percent hold that there is no factor threatening the integrity of the state. Political elites also suggested various measures to uphold integrity of Manipur. The measures include promoting the feeling of brotherhood and peaceful co-existence; minimize disparity between different ethnic groups, equal development in the hill and remote areas of the state, solution of insurgency problem and the policy of right person in the right place as the basis of governance. These findings have been highlighted in table 5.18. It is also found that majority of the political elites (93%) hold that both modernization process and age-old tradition should go hand in hand while 7 percent are in favour of modernization process. Majority of the political elites (78%) also considered that religion does not exercise influence in Manipur politics while 22 percent considered that religion influences politics in Manipur to some extent.
It is also found that majority of the political elites suggested that people oriented perspective, long term scientific planning and proper implementation of the planned development projects are essential for social development. An examination of political elite’s assessment of India’s Look East Policy revealed that majority of the political elites (91%) considered the policy as good and beneficial to the state, 4 percent not beneficial to the state while 5 percent of the political elites are unaware of the policy. The political elites also suggested various measures to provide maximum benefit to the state via the policy. These findings have been highlighted in table 5.20 of chapter 5. The study of political elite’s view on ethnic conflict in Manipur revealed that 30 percent of them considered the desire to dominate over one another, area domination and involvement of the underground outfits as the causes of ethnic conflict and clash in the state, 28 percent ethnic politics of some leaders for political mileage, 14 percent misunderstanding, rumour and ethnic politics of some leaders for political mileage, 13 percent misunderstanding, rumour, 9 percent protection of ethnic identity while 6 percent considered that misunderstanding, rumour, desire for dominance over one another and involvement of underground outfits as the causes of ethnic conflict and clash in the state. It is now crystal clear that some political elites are responsible for ethnic conflict in Manipur. Political elites also suggested various measures such as peaceful dialogue and co-existence, working to imbibe the spirit of trust and communal harmony, immediate employment of state machineries to stop ethnic conflict as and when it occur and strong political determination to create a society where there is development of all groups/sections of population to solve ethnic conflict in the state and these findings have been highlighted in table 5.21 of chapter 5.

The study makes it amply clear that political elites in Manipur are aware of various issues/problems which are found in the state. They are also equipped with some measures to solve or meet the various issues or problems. However what is troubling the state and its people is that they are not able to materialize in action the measures that they have at their disposal to the fullest extent. This is because of the dominance of their self interest over the general interest. It will be much better if political elites, in spite of their differences in party affiliation and ideology, work together in the pursuit of making
Manipur a peaceful and developed state in India. The political elites must be able to create and set vision in such a way that all have a clear direction in which way to travel. This task may require technical expertise and ability to predict and translate the overall strategy of administration into manageable tactics. They should be able to highlight the future of society or state in real and understandable terms. They must develop a proper coordination of all, from rank to file, who are engaged in the governance of the state with personal conviction to the vision. There is also the need to develop a feedback culture which keeps fresh information flowing to the top and increases the likelihood of correct decision making. Nothing is possible without understanding what is going on at the ground level. Political elites need to penetrate into the layers of dynamics, sentiments and emotion which are not readily visible. This will occur only in the right atmosphere of trust and will educate the political elites with the real spirit of what is actually going on under their nose. Political elites in Manipur need to create a political culture where a true bond between the public and the state is established. One of the biggest failures of political elites in the state is their inability to establish a political culture. People not only want to know what to do but they also need to know why they are doing it and where it fits into the bigger picture of the state.

The church or any other religious body has no right to intervene in politics, particularly on the voting choice of the believers. Sometimes, it might have an official stand on a party but it should not be imposed on the faithful. Political leaders often use religion to whip up passions and garner political mileage. The unfortunate part of our democratic system is that no stern action is taken against people who spew venom. Manipur has many militant and civil organizations which seem to be more satisfied by indulging in the affairs of communal and ethnic politics and political and religious identities. Political leaders guided by self interest work and go with such organizations to serve their purposes and take political mileage and in this ugly endeavour they throw the common people in the gamut of uncertainty and suffering. Fake encounter, extortion by personnel in uniforms, conspiring and victimizing upright officials, mistrust in government machinery marked the working of the administration and governance. Failure of the political leaders/elites to redress the grievances of the people has always invited protests and demonstrations from the public which cause frequent unrest disturbing the normal life of the state.
Development or growth means more wealth, more employment, more amenities and more education with a proper and systematic arrangement of things into proper place and in the right time. Focusing only on funds to spend on projects alone will not improve the well being of the general public. Fund allotments to the government are possibly made with good intensions in most of the cases but implementation and monitoring of the said fund is far from the desired level with no concrete result for the general public to see and feel. Job completion on paper has produced no positive result. Public money is for the public and it must be utilized sincerely and honestly in the best interest of the public. The feedback system, monitoring system and physical verification during and after completion of the scheme or project by the concerned authority is very important and necessary. Defaulters must be made to compensate or given exemplary penalty. It requires effective intervention of political elites who are solely responsible for policy making and planning. Manipur urgently needs political leaders who can produce effective mechanism for inclusive growth where the benefits of growth or development reach the largest section of the society and that the maximum numbers of people are able to derive benefits from the development projects. Inclusive growth is imperative and it has to be enlarged and expanded. The MP/MLA local area development scheme provides an MLA/MP an opportunity to take care of his or her constituency. However, the scheme, in most cases, is associated with high degree of mismanagement, misappropriation, misuse coupled with irregularities and weak monitoring and improper maintenance of records. No comprehensive evaluation of the scheme has ever been undertaken. There are many constituencies where no concrete evidence on the ground of the utilization of money is seen. The state of Manipur, till now, has not come up to the stage of development which a society should have. Thanks to the political elite in Manipur, the number of hours in load shedding is too long, a record befitting a place in the Guinness Book of World Record. The roads are filled with potholes, the National Highways connecting the state with the rest of India are in deplorable condition, a little drizzle is enough to flood many places, job creation is painfully low and many families have lost their sons and daughters – some to guns and some in search of jobs for survival. The common people learnt and are learning to live with the hard-to-believe situation. It is
really unfortunate for the state and its people that the political elites have turned a blind eye to this highly deplorable and inhuman condition. They made tall promises before they get elected as representatives of the people. But once elected, most of the political elites prefer to stay in their comfort zones and lead irresponsible lives without making a determined and serious attempt to accomplish what they have promised to undertake for the state and its people. They still continue their habit of making things go slow and sluggish in spite of the fact that Manipur now is a part of the global village. They failed to meet the impact of the arrival of the globalization process. Rather, people are kept at such a subsistence level that they keep on engaging in the tasks to make their ends meet. At the same time people are easily carried away by money and muscle power at the time of election. Multiple factors such as political change from feudal autocracy to democracy, religious orthodoxy in the past, self-centered politicians and long neglect of the state by the central leaders are all contributory factors for the present situation of Manipur which Durkheim would have characterized as anomic.

People expect a lot, concrete and worth appreciable works from the three Members of Parliament who represent Manipur. But they failed to put collective effort on the issues of the state and for socio-economic upliftment of the people. Manipur has not, so far, produced a political leader who can question the central leaders as to why they wanted Manipur to be a part of India if they did/do not have energy and time to think about the development of the state and welfare of its people. Political leaders in Manipur did not do anything which can distinguish them from others by giving priority to such areas like generating a potential power source at least for some decades to come, a perennial source for the supply of drinking and hygienic water and a network of standard roads. Water, an essential life supporting basic necessity has become a scarce item in the state though it receives sufficient rainfall. The system of pipeline supply of water to each household, even in the capital city of Imphal, has been a total failure.

The infrastructure of the state is such that common people are deprived of any decent means of livelihood. On the other side of the coin, a handful enjoys rapid increase in financial capacity without a known source and such persons are able to lure the voters at
the time of election and some of them come out as representatives of the people. They lead the people in such a way that the latter are not conscious of ideology of a political party or another and the manifestoes of any political parties have no value to the electorates. Those in power somehow formulate policies but not to solve the problem with a holistic approach, rather to be manipulated for their own vested interests. The policy so far made in the state failed to capacitate the state producers and could not provide those facilities to enable them compete with the producers of other states. Compelling the producers to live and work without availing them the essential infrastructure is an unfavourable state of affairs in the state.

The AFSPA-1958 imposed in the state as a means to contain insurgency problem could not bring a positive result towards the desired end. The insurgency problem could not be totally suppressed and the killing of insurgents and innocent public under fake encounters is not the solution. Justice (Retd.) Jeevan Reddy Committee had minutely studied the provisions of the AFSPA-1958 and recommended the repeal of the Act in its report submitted to the government of India. The Prime Minister of India also did not support the provisions of this controversial Act and expressed his desire of a law which is more humane and justifiable to the people. Therefore, political dialogue between the insurgent groups and the government would be the only means for finding an amicable solution of the problem in the state.

Human resource is the backbone of a society. Without value based and quality education, a society would remain stagnant. Most of the educational institutions which generate human capital/resource are not up to the desired level, particularly in the remote areas of the state and there have been reports of many complains of not having teachers in schools and colleges, of broken school buildings, collapsed walls etc. Government schools exist for name sake only and most parents opt for private schools for the education of their children where teachers are employed with meager salary managed from the fees collected from the students. The role of government aid would have been significant in satisfying both ends but with no determination to check and rectify the grant and usage of government aid, a situation has created that acts against the interests of the schools and teachers. Neither political leaders nor concerned authority has ever taken up any constructive step with a vision for tapping the
potential of the youths of the state. Rather, mismanagement and corrupt practices have manipulated and destroyed this potential which would have been very effective in bringing positive change and progress of the state. Political elites need to show the public especially the youths and students that it is hard work that pays and not anything else. The vast majority of the youths are at a loss with no promise of their future and they have developed contempt of social and political institutions as these institutions have failed to inspire them. The problem associated with the future pillars of the state is a serious problem which can be dealt only by those in the realm of politics whose power is immense. Unfortunately, no government formed by a set of political elites or another that ruled the state did anything which was/is outstanding and could be fondly remembered. There is no bad politics but only bad politicians. Power can correct people and persons in power make all the difference.

Right from day one of its merger into India, Manipur had/has political elites who are only power mongers – those who work just to be in the position of power by keeping aside the responsibilities bestowed upon them by the public. The resultant and associated problem of irresponsible political elites is manifested in the form of corruption which they shamelessly claimed time and again as the greatest challenge. They neither have the determination nor commitment to solve the problem; instead prefer to point their fingers to their predecessors in order to escape from their responsibilities. They keep the laws toothless on one hand and they have been chanting to curb unwanted corruption whenever they are in a public forum. At one time, bribe was paid for getting wrong thing done but now it is paid for getting things done at the right time. Political elites are responsible to find ways and means for good governance. Corruption subverts all law and order and the delivery of justice. It has to be rooted out, whether by the bureaucracy, political set up or the judiciary so that democracy functions properly in the interest of the state and its people. It is here that political elites of the state have to take the lead and play the most pivotal role.

Very recently, the government of India has taken a decision to reduce the export obligation under Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme to 25% of the normal export obligation. This facility taken up as a part of India’ Look East Policy will be available to the North Eastern states and Sikkim. This is being done to promote
manufacturing activity and generating employment in the North Eastern states. EPCG is an export promotion scheme under which an exporter can import certain amount of capital goods at either zero or three percent customs duty for upgrading technology related with exports. Myanmar has also been included in the list Focused Market Scheme (FMS) which aims to offset high freight cost to certain international countries with a view to make India more competitive in these markets. This step is also likely to benefit exports from the north east region as Myanmar borders four North Eastern states including Manipur. Unfortunately, political elites in Manipur neither make any sincere and concerted effort to make people aware of the Look East Policy and provide necessary education to meet the challenges associated with the policy nor lead the people in the right path to get maximum benefit from the policy. There is a lot to be done before the policy fully materialize – from infrastructure development to provision of enabling the people to derive benefit as well as meet the challenges associated with the policy. Though Myanmar is comparatively backward, its highways are broader and well constructed than those of Manipur. Moreh, a town in Manipur bordering Myanmar, has attracted attention of many trans-border traders and it can be a major international commercial hub. But no serious attempt has so far been made by the political elites in the state to develop Moreh as a modern town. When one reaches Moreh, piles of garbage and waste materials can be seen on road sides. And yet, the political elites of the state keep on harping Moreh as the gateway to South East Asia.

The benefit of the policy should not confine to those in power and their close associates only. It should reach the common people. For this, political elites need to understand the Look East Policy thoroughly and take up the necessary steps in proper time and place. However, such political outlook and commitment from the political elites of the state is very rarely seen. Rather, they are engaged more in buying or possessing a piece of plot or landed property in the border town of Moreh. This practice is the highlight of the political elites of the state. Most of the seminars and workshops held in the state to discuss the benefit and challenges of the Look East Policy were organized and participated by academicians. The organization and participation by the political elites of the state in these events could be more significant and relevant because they are the decision makers and their decision gives far reaching impact. The political elites do not
make any constructive suggestions to the central leaders so that the same is incorporated in the policy so as to provide more benefit to the state and its people. Instead, they merely go by the steps that the central leaders adopted under the policy and remained as mere spectators. Indeed, it is a fact that ‘high command’ or ‘Delhi durbar’ is the phrase synonymous with the political parties and the political elites of the state. This phenomenon is so pervasive today that no political elites have been able to chart out their own course of action with wisdom sans Delhi or central leaders. This is not to mean altogether that the Delhi centric approach is unhealthy for the state but it also cannot be said that the trend is healthy either. What is to be noted is that this approach has produced a strange belief that Manipur can and will only prosper when the state government is run by the political elites of the party/ parties which is / are in power at the centre. Politics may be about identifying the political party to align with to be in power but one should not forget that there is something called values that we uphold and ideology that we cherish.

The government formed by a set of political elites or other in the state is determined to suppress and eliminate the insurgent outfits operating in the state with an iron hand through any means including the imposition of controversial military Act – the Armed Forces Special Power Act-1958- against the will of the people. Since 1980 the whole of Manipur has been living under its shadow and the Act has brought a series of violence in Manipur and the psychology of impunity. The impact of this Act is such that hundreds of men and women have disappeared, been tortured, raped and killed. No action was taken against the army despite many reports of human rights violation. The frustration and anger of the people produced by the Act are so high that spontaneous agitations against the Act and security personnel involved in the act of human rights violation have been made throughout the state. Mention can be made of the 12 elderly women who stripped themselves naked and demonstrated in front of the Assam Rifles headquarters carrying placards bearing the words ‘Indian Army Rape Us’. A lone lady, Irom Sharmila Chanu, has been on fast up to death for more than a decade and another Manipuri, Pebam Chitaranjan, had gone to the extent of torching himself to death on 15 August, 2004 (he received about 85% burn of his body and succumbed to the injuries on 16 August, 2004) demanding the repeal of the Act. The recommendations of the Jeevan Reddy Committee,
set up to review the Act, have still not been implemented by the Union government. Nor are the political elites in Manipur putting any serious pressure to the centre for the same. ¹

Our study of the political elites has clearly shown that the state’s political elites are not seriously concerned with the sentiment and emotion of the people whom they represent in the democratic setup of the state. It is a constitutional right of the people to undertake peaceful protests with regard to various issues confronting them including the issue of AFSPA-1958. But there are many instances wherein public had to bear merciless torture from the police or paramilitary forces. More than half a dozen human right groups had been branded as terrorists. On August 5, 2010, many human right defenders were arrested and detained under the National Security Act as part of the crackdown to suppress the protest against illegal extra-judicial killing in Imphal by police. The peaceful and democratic agitations of the people were met with brute force because the political elites were/are indifferent to the people’s cause and adopted a couldnot –care-less-attitude. This is not democracy but demoncracy.

Manipur has been worst affected by militarization and the AFSPA-1958 has affected the state and its people so severely that the demand for repealing the military Act has been tabled in the 19th session of the United Nations at Geneva on March 5, 2012. It can be mentioned here that the government of India had assured the Human Rights Council of the United Nations that it will give a response to the issue of the AFSPA-1958 before the month of September, 2012 during its examination of India at its second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in May 24, 2012 at Geneva. This is a positive step that the United Nations has sought a remedial action from India after the repeal of the controversial Act has been recommended by countries like Slovakia, Switzerland and France. It will be no exaggeration to say that if the government of India either make modification of the Act to make it more humane or repeal the Act from the State of Manipur by understanding the pulse of the people, the credit should go to those individuals and civil society organizations who leave no stone unturned for the repeal of the Act. The political elites in Manipur are hardly related with the efforts to repeal or modify the Act. Rather, they have politicized the Act and used it as an election plank.

¹ The Act, it may be mentioned here, has been removed from the Imphal municipality areas of the state in August, 2004 due to the tremendous mass movement.
They tried to woo the voters on the promise that if they are voted to power then the military Act would be repealed from the state. However, people/voters have refused to believe the trumpeting of the political elites as they had all been tried and tested before.

Politics is the noblest and highest profession in the true sense of the term and it could lead the society and its people towards development. However, political elites in Manipur are misusing politics for their personal gain. Manipur is not ungovernable but is made ungovernable by those who stand to gain by it. When election time approaches, self style political leaders under the garb of ‘social worker’ came out in every corner of the state. They used all possible means to gain public support, a prerequisite, in achieving their business oriented politics. They are all responsible for the shocking state of affairs in the state. The degradation of the democratic political process in the state is such that entering election fray has become impossible without several crores of rupees and private armies or gangs. Vote mathematics is the highest value for the political elites and they go on dividing the people into pieces on the basis of religion, region, language and ethnic group or community to serve their vested interest. State or national interest is given least priority. Gaining political power to become millionaire/billionaire and serve any interest other than public welfare has become the supreme value of the political elites in Manipur. Political elites are so preoccupied in the fight for ministerships and creamy portfolios that they have no time for serving the people. The need of the hour, apart from transparency and accountability, is that political elites should be endowed with character and competence and motivated by the spirit of public service. Given the characteristics of political elites in the state, as has been shown in our study, it is apparent that Manipur may have to wait for another three/four decades for the emergence of such class of elites who can deliver good governance and serve the people in the way they ought to serve.