The thesis deals with the political and constitutional developments in the erstwhile princely State of Manipur from 1919 till its merger with India in 1949. Based on an intensive analysis of the available source-materials and interviews with the surviving members of the power-elite of the era under study, it constitutes, perhaps, the first systematic, objective and critical analysis of the political history of Manipur as well as the genesis, growth and rise of the democratic movement in the region.

Apart from unpublished documents, such as the files of the Foreign and Political Department, I have considerably relied on some of the available published material such as various pamphlets and reports published by the Manipur State Congress. But I have been handicapped in my research by lack of access to certain important Government of India files on deposit with the National Archives of India, and certain files of the All-India Congress Committee on deposit with the Nehru Memorial Library and Museum at New Delhi. The concerned authorities did not allow me to consult such documents which related to post-1945 events.
The method of analysis is the 'old-fashioned' historical descriptive, as there was no other way for me to present my material and analysis in a coherent manner. I hope this study of Manipur's rise to political democracy coinciding with her merger with the Indian Union constitutes not only an original contribution to the existing knowledge about the politics of the erstwhile princely States but also ipso facto constitutional history of the Indian Union.

The first chapter introduces the Manipuri society and politics in a historical setting and depicts how Manipur underwent changes under several dynasties through ages.

The second chapter analyses the genesis and growth of political consciousness among the Kuki tribesmen. The Kuki rebellion broke out during 1917-1919 when they were compelled by the local Government to provide labourers to be sent to Mesopotamia. The rebellion put the State in turmoil throughout a whole year, then, gradually, normalcy was restored.

The third chapter studies the development of the semi-religious, semi-political movement led by
Jadonang in 1930s, which aimed at the eventual overthrow of the British Government and annihilation of the Kukis and the Meiteis and, therefore, the establishment of a 'Kabui Naga Raj'. The political cult of Jadonang spread to the far-flung areas of Manipur and the Naga Hills. The movement died away as the leader was killed by the Government before it could get out of control.

The fourth chapter is the continuation of the Kacha-Naga movement led by Jadonang. After him the movement was spear-headed and intensified by Gaidinliu. She popularized the non-cooperation movement among the highlanders. In no time it spread over to the areas inhabited by the Nagas. The movement was soon suppressed by the Government of India. On the whole, it played its role in the politicization of the Naga tribals.

The fifth chapter discusses the problem of Manipur's accession to the erstwhile proposed Indian federation. The Maharaja of Manipur came out with certain reservations and desired to introduce some of his own reforms in the State, which were not in conformity with the Government of India Act, 1935. He was unwilling to join the proposed federation as it entailed the limitation of his own administrative authority.
The sixth chapter focuses on the Women's Bazar Agitation of 1939, caused by the scarcity of foodgrains. As the price of rice rapidly rose, the poor people faced starvation. The consequent agitation soon assumed political overtones. The movement subsided as soon as the price of rice went down and economic condition improved.

The seventh chapter deals with the political activities of the Bengali elites for the creation of a north-east Indian frontier province composed of Manipur, Cachar, Cooch-Behar, Tripura, etc., who were apprehensive of the possible Assamization of the Bengalis in Assam. The movement fizzled out as it could not mobilize the support of the general public; moreover, the Central Government turned down the demand for the creation of the so-called 'Purbachal Pradesh'.

The eighth chapter deals with the political factors which led to the constitutional movement in Manipur during the late 1940s. This was the period when the people of Manipur aspired to replace the present autocracy by a limited constitutional monarchy. This resulted in a movement for the establishment of a representative government. Ultimately the Maharaja had to introduce a constitution and establish a nominal Assembly.
The ninth chapter describes the further intensification of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union. Undoubtedly the Maharaja was not in favour of Manipur's merger with the Indian Union, rather, he preferred to be grouped with Sikkim and Khasi States. Since the political leadership of the Congress Party was in favour of the merger, the Maharaja was obliged to sign the instrument of Manipur's accession to the Indian Union in 1949.

The conclusion provides an overview of the political developments in Manipur during the years 1919-1949, and makes one feel that the process of democratization in British Indian territories had an impact on the people and politics of Manipur, particularly during the thirties and the forties. The accession of Manipur to the Indian Union was a landmark in the political development of the Manipuris and, later on, the granting of full statehood to Manipur gave it a status of equality with other constituents of the Indian Union.

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