CHAPTER IV

ISSUES AND PEOPLES' REACTION.

A political issue is defined as a policy based controversy relevant to the mass public's evaluation of either political parties or candidates for public office. The link between citizens and their elected leaders that arises from political issues lies at the very heart of democratic governance.

Every political system has its own peculiar characteristics that influence and shape its nature and contents. These factors manifest it during elections and shape the outcome of the elections. The result is therefore the product of the various factors within a political system. On the other hand, the opinions and views of the electorate is the carrier of the factors and forces within the system. Both the factors and the peoples' perception of it influence and shape each other. Therefore, the outcome of the election, again, is an indicator of the peoples' aspiration and wishes in the political system.

Elections are largely influenced by several factors and electoral politics are shaped by the changing position and trends of these factors. Parties convert

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Ibid
these factors into election issues and fight the elections. However, in the Indian context, politicization of these issues and the propaganda on these issues by rival political parties may not have much impact on the understanding and consciousness of the public directly due to high rate of illiteracy and lower economic conditions that do not facilitate the easy reach of information of these factors. However, its overwhelming presence, importance and prominence in the national perspective can influence the decision of the voters. Thus, it can affect the election outcome and shape its future trends.

By now, quite a number of Indian states have their local regional political parties, which generally try to emphasize the local issues. They have posed themselves as an alternative to the national parties whose policy has not been satisfactorily benefited by the states.

Changes in the predominant issues from one election to another may affect voting behavior greatly. Local issues always influence the choice of the voters. Political parties try to identify itself with local issues and thereby secure for itself popular local support. Issues which are directly relevant to class position, such as those involving the extension of the welfare state, nationalization of industry or the rights of trade unions, will presumably increase the correlation between economic class position and voting. On the other hand, issues involving civil rights, civil liberties, public morality, or foreign policy are not easily linked with

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3 Election issues, accessed through election issues. Dated 12-6-08
4 R P Singh, *Open* p 68
the economic class position. Evidences from many countries indicate that the better-educated people tend to be more internationalists less jingoistic or xenophobic more tolerant in comparison with those people who are conservative. At the same time better educated person are not so concerned with the issues of religion or racial fanaticism. They are rather concerned with the administrative problems.

The electorate is constantly being replaced and the personality of candidates and issues may be factors in persuading the voter to change his party allegiance. Moreover, the role of issues in an election tends to be more in the nature of a post-mortem on the consequences of policies not a consideration of the electoral promises contained in the party programmes.

Political parties and social groups help voters make sense of political issues. They endure across elections and tend to maintain consistent orientations towards issues. Given the low attention most people pay to politics the long-standing consistency of parties on most issues provides a critical link for allowing voters to make policy-oriented vote choice. Parties also enhance the accurate use of valence type performance issues, as they provide the over time continuity necessary for voters to reward good performance and to punish bad performance.

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7 Ibid
8 Alan R Ball, *Op cit*, p 131
10 Ibid
Social groups can also assist citizens in casting meaningful policy votes. Labor, business, religious, linguistic, racial/ethnic groups traditionally have been important sources of cues for voters. Feelings toward a group and awareness of the group’s position on an issue can serve to alert the voter on the issue and can help determine the voter’s own position.11

Some issues are more important in elections than others are. Sometimes this happens by accident and sometimes by design. A participant citizen is supposed to take active interest in policies and if he rationally decides, he votes parties on the merits of the issues of policy of various parties.12 Indian politics are said to be oriented not by issues but by personalities. Not all persons who pay attention to the campaign would be clear in their minds about issues.13

The objective of the study is to find out how far the respondents are familiar with current issues of the state and their reaction on the issues and how far their position on these issues is related to voting choice. The respondents were asked to indicate the issues in the state during 2002 assembly elections. The issues listed by them can be seen in the following table.

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11 Ibid.
12 N S G Kini, OpCit, p 98
13 Ibid, p 149
Table 4.1 Distribution of respondents by identification of issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurgency</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic problems</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdevelopment</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial integrity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandhs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces Special Powers Act(AFSPA)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know/No response</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of respondents who were able to identify issues works out to 93% while 7% of the respondents are in the category of 'Do not know' and 'No response". This certainly is a high percentage. Compared with traditional democratic beliefs, the findings of modern voting research present a sobering account of the information actually possessed by the electorate. Many electors are well informed, but the gradient of knowledge is so steep that very large parts of the public are, indeed, ignorant of very elementary political facts.\(^{14}\)

The issues mentioned by the respondents are as follows.

(1). **Insurgency**: An insurgent is a national of a country who is in revolt against the Government of his country and fights to overthrow the Government by

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guerilla warfare. Academically, insurgency has been defined as a struggle between a non-ranking group and ruling authorities in which the former consciously employs political resources and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for some aspect of the political system it considers illegitimate. Hence, insurgency may break out against a particular regime, particular persons of a regime, particular structures and salient values a regime upholds, or particular policies or biases of a regime. In all such possible cases, the prime objective of insurgents would be to capture power and replace the political community. Insurgency has been classified into six types – Secessionist, Revolutionary, Restorational, Reactionary, Conservative and Reformist. There is however, complete agreement among scholars that insurgency is a form of political violence and is a means to achieve any of the above mentioned ends. The variables that determine the fate of insurgent movements include popular support, organisational cohesion, external support, geography and environment.

Manipur is one of the oldest insurgency infected states in independent India. The last few decades have seen the emergence of a number of insurgent groups. With three major ethnic groups in Manipur, its insurgency is also primarily divided into insurgent groups of Meitei, Naga and Kuki.

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17 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
The large number of insurgent groups existing in Manipur and their extortion demands have made the people realize that most of them are deviating from their main aim. In any case, most of the younger cadres in the factions are doing this only because they have nothing else to do. Protracted deployment of security forces in the state to handle insurgency caused a lot of inconvenience to common citizens and lawless violence perpetrated by the insurgents not merely disrupted the socio-economic development of the people but pushed them to the economic backwardness. This gave rise to compounding unemployment problem leading to involvement of youths in drug trafficking for easy money.

The immediate problem besetting the people of Manipur today is the failure of the state Government to enforce 'Rule of law' in the state. Apart from atrocities and Human Rights violations by the security forces, there is widespread violence and acts of crimes committed by unknown assailants. On December 13, 2004, for instance, the Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL) abducted the Manipur University Vice Chancellor and Registrar. They were released on December 17 after being shot in their legs. The KYKL justified this action on the grounds that both officials had acted improperly in the appointment of the Director of the Audio-Visual Research Centre of the University. In another incident, former Director General of Police of Manipur, Y. Jugeshwor Singh, was shot dead by KYKL militants on April 24, 2004, in front of his residence in Manipur.

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22 Manipur accessed through [www.idsa.in](http://www.idsa.in). Dated 12-6-08.
23 Manipur elections-accessed through [www.christianaggression.org](http://www.christianaggression.org) dated 20.09.08.
Imphal. The KYKL claimed that Singh had disobeyed its diktats and was campaigning for the BJP candidate\textsuperscript{24}.

Common citizens who want a normal and peaceful life are fed up with the no-win situation. A related aspect is the fear of extortions, kidnapping and killings of businesspersons. In order to survive, almost every industry or business, big or small, in most part of the state, makes regular contributions to different underground outfits\textsuperscript{25}. All the employees of the medical, fisheries, Education departments in Thoubal District protested against the demand of money, kidnap of officers etc., on the 25th October 2005 and demanded a peaceful working.\textsuperscript{26} All these reactions from the public emerged from long-sufferings. For any State, region/country to prosper a secure and peaceful environment is necessary.\textsuperscript{27} Further, the respondents were asked whether the issue of insurgency in the state should be suppressed or resolved by negotiations. The responses are presented in the following table.

Table 4.2 Distribution of respondents on resolution of insurgency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should be suppressed</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't say</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Interview with respondents.
\textsuperscript{26} Poknapham (Manipuri Local Daily), dated 26/10/2005.
\textsuperscript{27} Interview with a respondent.
People’s reaction to issues like insurgency shows that majority of the respondents has rejected the option of suppressing insurgency by any means. As many as 56% respondents have suggested that the issue of insurgency should be solve by negotiations. Another 30% respondents were in favour of using force to end insurgency in the state. The rest of the respondents (14%) were not certain as to how the problems of insurgency should be handled. It is also documented that the respondents believes corruption, poor economic condition and unemployment are the causes of the increase in the number of insurgent. Unless unemployment and corruption are arrested in the state there seems to be no other alternatives to ending insurgency.

(2) Corruption: Corruption, when applied as a technical term, is a general concept describing any organized, interdependent system in which part of the system is either not performing duties it was originally intended to, or performing them in an improper way, to the detriment of the system's original purpose. Corruption is a term with many meanings, but generally, it entails misusing one’s office for a private gain or unofficial end.

The most dangerous social evil in the Manipuri society today is the rampant corruption. Corruption in governance and public life siphoning of public money by unscrupulous public servants, fraudulent withdrawals of taxpayers' money without executing public works, irregular and fake appointments in government departments, bribery in appointments, transfers and posting of government officials. 

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servants, have become order of the day in our society. In the field of politics, also the picture is equally gloomy. Moral integrity, talents of the political leaders and political ideologies hardly count in elections. Money power and muscle power decide election results. On November 25, 2004 KYKL, militants shot six examination invigilators in their legs in capital Imphal for allegedly encouraging students to take recourse to unfair means to pass the test. Two women accused of doing the same were beaten up and warned of harsher punishment if they repeated the mistake. Another 10% of the respondents recognised the issue of corruption as the most important issue in 2002 elections.

To understand the people's reaction on corruption, the respondents were asked if they were tired of the large-scale corruption in the state. The responses are presented in Table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reactions</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't say</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Distribution of respondents on corruption

30 Ibid.
31 E:\Recommendations of the Symposium on 'Save Manipur' KanglaOnline ~ Your Gateway.htm. Dated 7-02-09.
32 Manipur- accessed through www.idsa.in dated 7-02-09.
The above table vividly indicates that people are not happy of corruption in all spheres of life. Most of the respondents said that public offices are bought and sold in the state\textsuperscript{33}. The respondents also feel that merits and talents are no longer sole criteria for government appointment and every government job has a price tag in Manipur. One of the respondents said that the general decline in morals and ethics was the cause of corruption in the state.

(3) Economic problems: The economic problems in Manipur are caused by many factors like transport bottleneck, militancy, non-availability of mineral resources, lack of power resources, minimization of medium and large-scale industries, weak agriculture and non-payment of salary in time to the state government employees by the state\textsuperscript{34}. The disadvantageous geographical location of the state is one of the main obstacles to its economic development. According to study, the North East region as a whole shares less than one percent of its borders with the rest of the country, and the rest with Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Tibetan region of China.

There has been talk of converting this location disadvantage into a boon because of an increasingly integrated world economy. This is particularly so when all the seven states of the region are on international borders. In addition, these states are very close to the dynamic South-East Asian economies\textsuperscript{35}. Thus, rational policy thinking in this area should be developed. As many as

\textsuperscript{33} Interview with respondents.
\textsuperscript{34} Election Issues- accessed through www.archweb.org. Dated 17-02-09.
\textsuperscript{35} North-East India- accessed thorough www.cic.nic.in. Dated 2-02-09.
15% respondents felt that an economic problem in the state is the most important issue in this election.

To inquire about the people's reaction to this problem the respondents were asked whether their financial situation had improved during the past five years. The responses are given below in the table.

**Table 4.4 Distribution of respondents by financial situation in the past five years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial situation</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worsened</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented above suggests an improvement in the economic conditions of the 10% respondents. Since the perception of improvement in one's financial situation largely depends on his or her own satisfaction in life, people having done well would automatically feel an improvement\(^{36}\). However, the majority of the respondents feel that their financial situation has remained the same over the past five years or worsened.

(4) **Bandhs:** Bandhs, originally a Hindi word meaning 'closed', is a form of protest used by political activists in some countries in South Asia like India and Nepal. Often Bandhs means that the community or political party declaring a

Bandh expect public to stay in their homes and strike work. In addition, all the shopkeepers are expected to keep their shops closed and the transport operators like buses and cars are supposed to stay off the road and not carry any passengers. All this is expected to be voluntary, but in many instances, people are terrorized into participating in a Bandh.\(^37\)

The Supreme Court of India has banned Bandhs in 1998, but political parties still organize them. In 2004, the Supreme Court of India fined two political parties, BJP and Shiv Sena for organizing a Bandh in Mumbai as a protest against bomb blasts in the city.\(^38\) The Telegraph Daily newspaper reported in this way, "In West Bengal, where the CPI (M) leads a coalition in power, CPI (M) leaders speak out against Bandhs and the damage they cause to productivity and work culture. But in Kerala, where the CPI (M) leads a political formation which is not in power, it is actively involved in promoting and organizing Bandhs." It is a difficult problem for any political party in the country to have a clear-cut ideology on the holding of Bandhs.\(^39\)

The state government's ineffectiveness in meeting the growing aspirations of the people and the alleged excesses committed by the security forces in the course of countering militancy are the main reasons for calling Bandhs in the state. Militants also call for Bandhs on days of national significance like Republic Day, Independence Day, etc. Today, Bandhs or blockades (blockades in Manipur refer mainly to blocking of the movement of goods-laden vehicles

\(^{38}\) Ibid.
along the inter-state highways) have become the most common and effective means to force the government to redress popular grievances. It is observed that the tribal groups mainly resort to blockade of the inter-state highways that serve as the lifeline of the landlocked state. In contrast, in the plains, Bandhs are common.\textsuperscript{40}

The Manipur government has declared bandhs as illegal and a panel of four lawyers has been constituted to consider legal action against bandh organizers in the state. A rough official estimate has put the total loss incurred by Manipur due to bandhs from 2004 to 2007 at about Rs 1,320 crore.\textsuperscript{41}

According to Oinam Biren Singh, the retired director of economics and statistics department, Manipur 52 bandhs and 43 blockades in the 2007-08 financial year that led to losses to the tune of Rs 504.32 crore and Rs 236.68 crore respectively.\textsuperscript{42}

The frequent bandhs and blockades imposed on the inter-state highways by protestors have severely affected economic activities in the state and have led to acute shortages of essential commodities, including life-saving medicines. It is useful, in this context, to recall the 52-day-long (June 19 to August 11, 2005) blockade of the Mao-Imphal section of the NH-39 imposed by All Naga Students Association of Manipur (ANSAM) in protest against the state government’s decision to declare June 18 as ‘State Integrity Day’ in honour of

\textsuperscript{40} E:\DSA Strategic Comments The Growing Trend of Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur.htm. Dated 3-09-08.

\textsuperscript{41} Manipur Bandhs- accessed through www.e-pao-net. Dated 2-02-09.

\textsuperscript{42} Bandhs- accessed through www.manipuronline.com. Dated 6-03-09.
18 persons killed while protesting against the extension of ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM to Manipur. To provide relief to the people, the Indian Air Force was pressed into service to airlift medicines to Manipur from Guwahati.\(^{43}\)

The number of respondents who identified bandhs and blockades as an important issue in the state was 5%. To know people's reaction on bandhs and blockages the respondents were asked whether they consider bandhs and blockages as a necessary tool of protest. The responses are given in the table below.

**Table 4.5 Distribution of respondents by their opinion on bandhs and blockages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bandhs as tool of protest</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't say</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that majority of the respondents (55%) do not consider bandhs and blockages as a necessary tool of protest. In fact, people are aware of the economic loss of the state during such bandhs and road blockages\(^{44}\). However, some of the respondents confessed that there is no

\(^{43}\) E:\IDSA Strategic Comments The Growing Trend of Bandhs and Blockades in Manipur. Dated 22-01-09.

\(^{44}\) Interview with respondents.
better way to get attention of the government to solve their problems unless bandhs and road blockages are called\(^4^5\).

(5) **Stable government**: The need of Manipur today is a stable government. Encouraging defection will only bring instability as was witnessed in the seventh Manipur Assembly\(^4^6\). The Politics of Defection in Manipur began by 1963. In a span of 35 years, (1967 – 2002) Manipur has seen eight Chief Ministers and as many as 25 ministries. This is a clear indication of the fluidity of the political situation in Manipur. What is interesting is that none of the Chief Ministers and their ministries completed full terms\(^4^7\).

In the 2000 elections, the Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) won 29 seats. In order to form a stable government, it engineered the defection of nine MLAs from the Opposition parties, including the Manipur People’s Party (MPP) and the Nationalist Congress party (NCP). Nipamacha formed the Ministry with the Federal Party of Manipur (FPM), which had six seats. However, the coalition did not last long. Following the fast-paced switching of political loyalties, Nipamacha resigned in February 2001, paving the way for a new coalition government headed by the Samata Party leader, Radhabinod Koijam. The Samata Party had won just two seats, but its strength increased to 12 after 10 of the 11 Congress (I) MLAs joined it. Meanwhile, the Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) faced a split following infighting between Nipamacha and Th. Chaoba, former Union Minister of State for Food Processing. The group led by

\(^{4^5}\) Interview with respondents.
\(^{4^6}\) Political Defection- accessed through www.christainagression.org. Dated 22-09-08.
Chaoba was recognized as the real MSCP by a High Court order. Nipamacha formed the Manipur National Conference (MNC). Because of the bickering inside the party, 18 MLAs left the MSCP for the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The total strength of the BJP subsequently increased to 26, when two more MLAs from the FPM joined it.\(^{48}\)

A fresh crisis emerged when the BJP, with strength of 26 MLAs, wanted to join the Samata Party (SAP) government on the condition that the new coalition government is led by the BJP and that Koijam step down in favour of the BJP’s R.K. Dorendra. This formula was not acceptable to the Samata Party. The issue was referred to the respective high commands of the two parties. However, even the intervention of Home Minister L.K. Advani and Samata Party leader George Fernandes could not resolve the crisis. The Koijam government fell after BJP MLAs voted for a no-confidence motion against it\(^{49}\).

In a span of three decades since Manipur became a full fledged state in 1972, the state has witnessed as many as nine chief ministers and President’s rule on seven occasions.

However, only 3% of the respondents were able to identify this as an important issue. Further, the respondents were asked whether they consider political instability as the cause of the many problems in the state. The responses are given below.


\(^{49}\) Ibid.
**Table 4.6 Distribution of respondents by their reaction on political instability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't say</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that majority of the respondents (67.5%) are of the opinion that political instability caused by large-scale defection of political parties is the cause of the many problems faced by the state. However, 10% respondents were not aware that defection will bring political instability and in the process, developmental issues will be ignored. Again 22.5% respondents belong in the group of “can't say”. This response probably shows the political immaturity of the hill voters.

(6) **Territorial Integrity**: The question on territorial integrity of the state was an emotive and politically crucial agenda in the state. This issue was mentioned in the manifesto of all political parties in the 2002 elections. In the valley, protecting the territorial integrity of the state turned out to be one of the major issues of political debate⁵⁰.

Manipur was a sovereign kingdom. It had clearly demarcated territorial boundaries. It lost its sovereignty in the hands of British in 1891. Even during the British regime, its boundaries were honoured and kept intact. Later on, the territorial boundary of Manipur was clearly defined in section 3 of the North-
Eastern Areas (Re-organization) Act 1971 as on and from the appointed day there shall be established a new state to be known as the State of Manipur, with the territories which immediately before that were included in the Union Territory of Manipur. There is no ambiguity about the boundary of Manipur, when it was merged with the Indian Union in 1949 as mentioned in the First Schedule of the Indian Constitution, 1950. Manipur has been a pre-existing state before the adoption of Indian Constitution. Manipur merged with a definite boundary.\(^{51}\)

The People of Manipur had also objected to the extension of ceasefire to Manipur in 1964. The All Manipur People’s Convention submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister and Home Minister on 23-09-1965 objecting to the extension of ceasefire to Manipur.\(^{52}\) The All Manipur Students’ Union (AMSU) also came out strongly against the extension of ceasefire to Manipur.\(^{53}\) The Manipur Cultural Integration Center under the leadership of people from both hill and valley campaigned intensely in the late sixties to bring stronger emotional integration of people of Manipur.\(^{54}\) The people of Manipur in massive rallies participated by lakh of people from all communities and sections pledged to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Manipur on 4th August 1997 and 28\(^{th}\) September 2000 respectively.\(^{55}\) Ceasefire agreement without territorial limits (between the Government of India and NSCN (IM) invited a strong resentment from the public. Protests, rallies, demonstrations for days


\(^{53}\) Ibid

\(^{54}\) Ibid

and imposition of curfews could not bring normalcy. 18 lives were lost\textsuperscript{56}. Manipur Legislative Assembly building was burnt down. Official quarters of ministers were destroyed. Ministers were dragged out from their quarters. Government vehicles were destroyed. Despite the curfew and firings, demonstrations and protests could not be contained for days.

5% of the respondents claimed that this issue is the most important issue in the state during 2002 elections. However, the percentage of the respondents who identified this issue as the most important issues during the election is shocking because of the wide public response during the ceasefire. However, it may be mentioned that this issue was particularly very important in the valley and this study is confined to the hill areas of the state. To inquire about the people's reaction on this issue, the respondents were asked if they support the movement for territorial integrity of Manipur. The responses are given below.

**Table 4.7 Distribution of respondents by their support to the territorial integrity of the state**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{56} Sangai Express ( Manipuri Local daily), Imphal, dated 20/7/01.
The Table indicates that majority of the respondents (88%) supports the movement for the territorial integrity of the state. However, 12% respondents on the other hand indicated the fact that they did not support the cause and that they would like naga inhabited areas of Manipur to merged with the state of Nagaland.

(7) **The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958:** The Act has been in force in Manipur, since the time when Tamenglong District in Manipur was declared a ‘disturbed’ area more than 40 years ago. The Act gives far greater powers without judicial accountability than the original British law of 1942\(^57\), on which it is modelled. It is also in operation in Jammu and Kashmir and was used briefly in Punjab. The AFSPA gives the armed forces wide powers to shoot, arrest and search, all in the name of aiding civil power. Indian Parliament approved the Armed Forces (Assam- Manipur) Special Powers Act on the 22 May 1958 and was amended in 1972 to extend to all the seven states in the north- eastern region of India. They are Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland, also known as the seven sisters\(^58\).

Its stated aim was to contain insurgency, but ironically, it has only added fuel to an already inflamed situation, as (a) it effectively appropriates the powers of the democratically elected state government and civil administration and vests these in the army, the Governor and the Central government. (b) It abrogates the civil liberties and fundamental rights of the ordinary citizens by declaring a de facto state of emergency by suspending Article 32 (1). (c) it provides the

\(^{57}\) Brought in force to break the Quit India Movement.  
Centre absolute powers to deploy the army in the states or disturbed areas once the Governor (without consulting the elected Chief minister) or Central government has used his/her discretion to declare an area as 'disturbed' in the Gazette, (d) it provides the army absolute powers with immunity from legal accountability, since neither the citizens nor the state government can initiate legal proceedings or administrative action against the army without the previous sanction of the Central government\textsuperscript{59}.

The enforcement of the AFSPA has resulted in innumerable incidents of arbitrary detention, torture, rape, and looting by security personnel. The unusual form of protest by some members of Meira Paibis, women organisations, who stripped in front of the Kangla Fort, then headquarters of the Assam Rifles, on 15 July 2004\textsuperscript{60} and an equally unprecedented civil disobedience movement in Manipur in July and August 2004 put the spotlight on the human rights violations in Manipur\textsuperscript{61}. The alleged extrajudicial execution of Thangjam Manorama Devi (suspected insurgent) on the night of 11 July 2004 by the Assam Rifles personnel sparked the protests demanding justice and the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1958\textsuperscript{62}.

Many protest rallies, dharnas, conferences and seminars were held all over India and abroad discussing the inhuman nature of AFSPA and the acts of demonized Indian Security Forces in Manipur under the banner of AFSPA. The

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid
\textsuperscript{60} Sangai express (Manipuri Local daily), Imphal, dated 18/7/2004.
\textsuperscript{61} AFSPA-accessed through \url{www.manipuronline.com}. Dated 13-06-08.
\textsuperscript{62} People of Manipur- accessed through \url{www.indiatogther.org} dated 7-02-09.
Naked Protest against Act launched by the group of bold Women of Manipur made headlines in the major National and Regional Newspapers across the length and breadth of the Country. The Jeevan Reddy committee, which was formed to review the AFSPA, has come out with the proposal of repealing the said act to incorporate some of its provisions in the unlawful activities (prevention) act, 1967. The proposal has been out rightly rejected by the then Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee. The State Government lifted the AFSPA from seven Assembly segments in Imphal valley from August 12, 2004 with the promise that if the situation improved the Act would be lifted from more areas. However, counter-insurgency operations are continuing. Although the Act is meant for Central forces, the State police and paramilitary forces are making use of it with impunity.

7.5% of the respondents felt that AFSPA was a burning issue in the state during 2002 elections. To know more about people’s reaction on this issue, the respondents were asked whether the Act should be scrapped. The responses are as follows:

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63 Ibid.
Table 4.8 Distribution of respondents on AFSPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act to be scrapped</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't say</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that 48.5% of the respondents feel that the Act should not be scraped. This finding is of importance since there has been wide demand for scrapping the Act. The manifestoes of all political parties contesting the 2002 elections also pledge to repeal the Act if voted to power. Some of the respondents feel that the present situation in the state would be worse without the Act. Another 44% respondents are of the opinion that the Act should be scrapped and that the Act violates basic human rights. Another, 7.5% respondents cannot say whether the Act should be repeal of not. The respondents believe that the government strategy of violence to end insurgency by imposing AFSPA is not the best approach.

(8) Underdevelopment: Underdevelopment takes place when resources are not used to their full socio-economic potential, with the result that local or regional development is slower in most cases than it should be. It results from the complex interplay of internal and external factors that allow less developed countries only a lop-sided development progression. Underdeveloped nations

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66 Interview with respondents.
are characterized by a wide disparity between their rich and poor populations and an unhealthy balance of trade.\(^{67}\)

Any development process should be able to encompass both the hills and the valley. However, the interesting feature is that while the development objectives can be common the development path has necessarily to be different in the two regions. What is a right development intervention in the valley need not be so for the hills and vice versa. However one cannot imagine any sustainable development of Manipur without developing the hills and the plans simultaneously. The development approach so far in the State has been valley-centric. 17.5% of the respondents claimed that underdevelopment is an important issue in the state. Again the respondents were asked about the causes of underdevelopment in the state. The responses are given below.

**Table 4.9 Causes of underdevelopment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insurgency</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insincerity of governement</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicates that 39% respondents believe that insurgency is the cause of underdevelopment in the state. If militancy has resulted in non-development, it is equally true that non-development has led to militancy largely. It is worthwhile noting that even before militancy broke out, there has

\(^{67}\) Development-accessed through E:\ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm. Dated 2-2-09
been virtually no development in Manipur. Majority of the respondents (49%) feel that insincerity on the part of the government in giving developmental schemes is the cause of underdevelopment in the state. While 12% respondents feel that the cause of underdevelopment in the state is due to other reasons such as corruption in awarding developmental schemes and implementations.

(9) Problems of higher education: Education in ancient times was discriminatory. It was the privilege of the few elite of the society; the children of the aristocrats as well as those of the nobles. Selection of the pupil was based on the status of the parents who would only take part in the affairs and administration of the state. However, education at present is open as well as encouraged to all. Thus, the right to education has become a fundamental right of every citizen.

In Manipur, the problem of higher education are bandhs and strikes a very flexible academic calendar, insincerity of teachers and students, etc. The rush of students out of the state after the declaration of 10+2 Examination Result is a clear indication of the failure of higher education in Manipur. The reason, a Three Years Degree Course (TDC) of Manipur University is misnomer, for it takes about five years to complete it. A Master’s (MA) degree that is supposed to complete in two years takes more than three years. Thus, the course that is supposed to complete in five years takes more than seven years.

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
years due to frequent bandhs and curfew. The students have to leave the state to avoid this unwelcoming system of higher education. **72**

Another problem is of the educated unemployed. The hard reality is that majority of the employment opportunities are now in the private sectors – which changes to keep pace with its global competitors. However in Manipur, besides government jobs, there are no private undertakings that can substantially employ a noticeable section of these educated people. **73** Absence of a counseling cell for students is another hindrance in the education of Manipur. **74**

10% of the respondents identified this issue as the most important in the eighth assembly elections. The respondents were further asked as to what are the problems of higher education in the state. The responses are given below.

**Table 4.10 Causes of problems in education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bandhs &amp; Strikes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insincerity of teachers and students</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption in education department</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that the respondents feel there are many problems associated with higher education in the state. Of which bandhs and strikes top.

72 Sangai Expresss (Manipuri Local daily), Imphal. Dated 15/09/08.
74 Ibid.
the list (44%) During electioneering the contesting candidates and political parties emphasize these issues heavily and made repeated pledges and promises about their solution.

The number of respondents who were able to identify issues works cut to 93%. The philosophical deduction on what guides the consciousness of the electorate is the reality of underdevelopment intertwined with political instability. This is intrinsically related to the issue of insurgency and its fallouts like the imposition of AFSPA and the demand for Nagalim. To the outside world, the issue of AFSPA and Nagalim seems to have preoccupied the states but in the minds of the people, it was stability and development.  

However, identification of issues is one thing and the importance of these issues in influencing the direction of partisan preference is another. Issues by themselves are meaningless in a voting context unless they influence the electorate one way or another. The respondents were asked if the issues influence their voting decision. We shall now deal with the weight of issues in voting decision.

Table no. 4.11 WEIGHT OF ISSUES IN VOTING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence voting</th>
<th>No of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it is clear that the position of a voter on issues is not related to his voting choice. This is a negative finding of great significance. While there are issues and considerable issue familiarity (about 93% of respondents is familiar), the position on them does not influence crucial political decisions. However, if issues are not important in vote, something else must be important.

Unlike as in mature political cultures in which issues as well as persons are important, in the case of Manipur persons are more important. In the hill areas, the candidates are known by their personal popularity rather than their party affiliations. Political personalities of particular leader have also played a significant role in influencing electoral behavior. The organization of political parties around the personalities of charismatic or popular leader at the top of party has always been a remarkable factor of popular support. More often than not, they seem to be of more important and inevitable than their parties. Voters also hardly concerned about the parties and their ideologies. This is borne home by the result of 2000 Assembly Elections. Most of the prominent leaders in the state returned to the Assembly but with a party tag different from their previous ones. Moreover, some of these charismatic personalities have a very substantial measure of control over their organization, so that a large number of the members follow them during their periodic defections.76

Therefore, people argue that an influential candidate can be more of help to them than an average candidate of a good party. Influential candidate when

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elected might be more helpful and dynamic in doing good to the constituency. The fact that a number of independents are in a position to win their seats also reflects the role of the public image of a candidate as a factor of voting behavior.\(^7\)

In 46 Assembly Constituency Saikul and 50 Assembly Constituency Kangpokpi, C. Doungel and Thangminlen Kipgen were elected repeatedly from 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2002 Assembly Elections. This indicates that candidate’s personality remained an important factor in attracting the voter’s choice overall.

Research elsewhere has shown, that the majority of voters, even in highly educated advanced industrial democracies, does not follow politics closely and do not have high levels of political information. The impact of issues, therefore, requires voters to use their limited information effectively. They are aided in this process by the presence of political parties that provide coherence to political pears to require considerable stimulation by political elites (parties or candidates) to activate issues.\(^8\)

After learning some important election issues and people’s reaction on the issues, the next chapter will examine the survey data in order to determine the factors influencing voting behaviour.

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\(^7\) N.G.S. Kini, Op cit, p. 103.

\(^8\) Russell J. Dalton, Election Studies in Richard Rose (ed.), Op cit, p. 188.