CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the major findings of the study. Chapter 1 tries to understand the concept of electoral politics and deals with the past state assembly elections from 1972 in order to understand the electoral dynamics in the state and the assembly elections of 2002.

The study of past assembly elections in the state shows that Manipur has come across eight Assembly Elections since it attained statehood (i.e., in 1972, 1974, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2002). In Manipur since 1972, the election results have shown that the turnout was high and that there was political fragmentation and hung assemblies. Leaders of political parties in Manipur are not free from the state of shifting loyalties from one party to another. Defections have been the bane of Manipur politics. Between the elections of 1967 and the imposition of the National Emergency (1971) five ministries fell. Again Manipur is ethnically and politically a fragmented state. Since 1972 to the present day only once did a political party get 30 out of 60 Assembly seats i.e., the congress in 1984.

Political instability has been a feature of the State since the 1984 polls, when the Congress (I) was forced to seek the help of independents to form the government despite winning half the seats in the 60-member Assembly.
Defection is common, even though several legislators have been suspended for violating the anti-defection law. In 1997, a group of Ministers and legislators, led by former Speaker Wahengbam Nipamacha, broke away from the ruling Congress (I) headed by Rishang Keishing and floated the Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP), which subsequently formed the next government.

A critical study of the history of elections in Manipur leads to the following findings:

High turnout of voters in elections and the percentage in 2002 elections was 90.38%. The electorate are influenced by several irrational forces like those of traditional chiefs, tribe, community, money, and above all, the image of the charismatic leader.

High turnout of women in the poll but small number of women contestants in elections. Only seven women candidates contested this round of elections and one was elected. In 2002 elections, 682661 females voted in comparison to 648599 male voters. Records have shown that from the year 1952 to 1998 only four women had contested in the parliamentary elections. They were – Ishwari Devi (1952, Lhingjaneng Gangte (1948), Anne Mangshatabam (1996) and Kim Gangte (1998). Out of these four women, only Kim Gangte came out successfully and represented Manipur in the House of the People.

However, women voters always outnumbered the men voters in every election held up to 2002. Contributions from the participants during group discussions
with women from various communities suggested that Women in Manipur could seldom come out successfully unless they (candidate) have a good political background. This means that the women candidates must be from either a minister’s wife or relative of a minister. High handed male power and money has been involved which is a serious constrain for women. In rural areas especially among the Christian’s women participation in politics is considered irreligious.

Some educated women are of the opinion that reservation of seats for women in the State Assembly and parliamentary will bring forth women to participate in politics. The society has negative attitude towards women who are involved in politics especially as a candidate. Therefore, it is not very encouraging for women to take part in politics. Normally husband and relatives does not permit women to take part in election. In Manipur, politics has always been treated as the arena for males, not for females.

Recent events show that the role of money and muscle power is growing. There is also the need of promising regional political party from the political scene of the state. A strong tendency on the part of the opposition MLAs to join the ruling party in the state as soon as the elections is over, irrespective of their previous political affiliations.

Emergence of the Congress (i) as the dominant political party. Since March 1972, Manipur mostly had Congress led coalitions governments under alternating leaders or Presidents Rule. With the announcement of election dates, there was hectic rush for party tickets to contest the election, especially
most of the contestants seeking the Congress tickets. One of the most important reasons was that Congress means the age-old tried and tested party with dynastic inheritance. Therefore, Congress could utilize most resources – money as well as manpower to retain the government. Naturally, the contestants felt of being victorious if they contest on a Congress ticket. While the Congress party has mostly been the leading party in the state assembly elections and has formed the government on most occasions, the most interesting aspect about elections results in Manipur has been the fragmented mandate given to political leaders by the people and the presence of independent candidates. Independent candidates have been prime targets for parties seeking to form the government, but which lacked a clear majority.

The 2002 elections results in Manipur showed all the attributes that have characterized electoral politics in the State since it attained statehood in 1972: high turnout, political fragmentation, and hung Assemblies.

In the second chapter, an attempt is made to study the manifestoes, programmes, and electoral performances of major political parties in Manipur. The Eighth Assembly Elections in Manipur were held on 14th and 21st February 2002. There were as many as 16 political parties and 17 Independent candidates that entered the electoral fray such as the Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI), Manipur People’s Party (MPP), Federal Party of Manipur (FPM), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) and Janata Dal (JD-U) besides number of unrecognized state parties like the Democratic
Revolutionary People’s Party (DRPP), the Manipur Nationalist Conference (MNC), and the Naga National Party (NNP).

All parties have their own party programmes, their objectives being to secure the welfare of the people, establish a social, secular, and democratic state, and preserve peace. Party programmes are contained in general terms, showing hardly any dividing lines between the parties. Political parties in Manipur are not by products of different ideological convictions but rather these groupings represent individual interests of the politicians. The breakaway groups from the Congress have no specific political agenda or ideologies. These are the Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) and the Manipur National Conference (MNC).

From the analysis of parties’ electoral performance in the state, it is clear that no political party from both national and regional could enjoy the status of complete dominion over other parties since 1972. In as far as the political parties in Manipur are concerned the oldest national political party, the congress can be termed as the most successful party in the state. Since March 1972, Manipur mostly had Congress led governments under alternating leaders. It is also evident that in all the assembly elections up to 2002 the Congress was the only party that contested almost all the seats.

An important feature of party system and politics in Manipur is the deep impact of party system and politics at the national level. Congress that dominated the party system and politics in India until 1967 election with the exception of 1977
election also dominated in Manipur. Congress, with the exception of 1967 General election, have won all seats or at least one seat out of two in every parliamentary elections since 1952 to 1966. Any increase in the number of parties at the national level or any change in national politics has found its impact in Manipur. Thus, Janata Party from 1977, BJP (1984), JD (1989), Samata Party (1995), RJD (1998) have made their presence felt in the state.

What should be described as the biggest weakness of the party system in Manipur is the absence of commitment to discipline. Leaders of various parties, off and on, changed their party affiliations just for the sake of having the loaves and fishes of office. It creates the serious problem of political defections. The frequency with which these deplorable acts of political defection have taken place in the recent past has resulted in political instability. In 2000 elections, the MSCP won 29 seats and form a government with the support of nine MLAs from the Opposition parties, including the MPP, FPM and the NCP. 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, Radhabindod Koirjam. The Samata Party had won just two seats, but its strength increased to 12 after 10 of the 11 INC MLAs joined it. Meanwhile, due to the bickering inside the MSCP, 18 MLAs left the MSCP for the BJP. The total strength of the BJP subsequently increased to 26, when two more MLAs from the FPM joined it. A fresh crisis emerged when the BJP, with strength of 26 MLAs, wanted to join the Samata Party government on the condition that the new coalition government is led by the BJP and that Koirjam step down in favour of the BJP's
R.K. Dorendra. This formula was not acceptable to the Samata Party. The Koijam government fell after BJP MLAs voted for a no-confidence motion against it. The result is chaos in administration. A healthy party system has not emerged in the state.

The study of election manifestoes made in Chapter 2 shows that for the eighth state assembly election, almost all the political parties took up three major issues: (i) territorial integrity of Manipur, (ii) acute financial crisis, and (iii) law and order (insurgency and peace) in the state. The manifestoes by different political parties in depicted more or less the same socio-economic and political objectives.

In the study of various manifesto and issues of political parties, it is seen that none of the manifesto dared to overlook some of the significant needs and issues agitating the minds of the voters for example to work for safeguarding the territorial integrity of the state, economic development, etc. All the political parties, therefore, somehow tried to focus them in their manifestoes. On the issue of economic bankruptcy, people and leaders are equally aware that no political party can come out with specific measures to tackle concrete financial crisis, such as non-payment of salaries for more than two months to government employees, state overdraft, generating state revenues, etc. Yet every party included the same in the party manifesto. There was not a single party, which did not promise to protect Manipur’s territorial integrity. Almost all political parties blamed the BJP-led NDA government at the centre for the alarm felt by the people of Manipur on the question of the territorial integrity of
their state. The BJP however, pledged to protect and preserve the territorial integrity of Manipur. Other issues like health care, unemployment, agriculture, industry, corruption, education and sports received only a routine mention without any clear blueprint for action and played almost an insignificant role in public meetings of the various parties.

Local issues mainly dominated the 2002 election manifestoes. The issues were mainly related to economic development and unavailability of basic infrastructure. For example, the creation of a Sadar Hill district was the most crucial issue that affected the voters in Kuki inhabited areas. The integration of Naga inhabited areas in one administrative unit was the most important issue in Naga inhabited areas.

In Manipur, excepting of a minority of educated elite voters, concentrated particularly in the urban area, the general voters did not bother about high ideological or doctrinal issues. However, election manifestoes did not play an important role in the electioneering process of the hill areas. It has more significance in the urban areas. Moreover, manifestoes were not easily available to the people of the hills. The tribal people were equally not interested in election manifesto. It was only the personal appeals of the candidates that were circulated widely in the constituencies. The manifestoes were usually absent especially from the side of the regional parties while the national parties did not care to translate these to the local language.
The second Chapter also attempted to study the efforts and activities of the candidates and political parties to reach the electorate while campaigning. In the sampled constituencies, the campaign devices adopted on a large scale included community feasts, boiling tea in the chiefs' residence, door-to-door campaigning, wall writing/posters, and election meetings. The study found that the main medium in the campaign carried out by all the political parties was house campaigning. This contact was found to be more effective than any other methods. This process and technique of campaigning have a great influence in the voting behaviour since it involves direct contact between the candidates and the electorates. Candidates stopped in front of houses and shops and talked to the people around while the supporters distributed leaflets directly to the voters with an appeal to vote. Appeals were made in the name of party, tribe, and the personality and performance of the candidate. Such campaigns were held in the evening in order to contact as many as voters as possible. Some of the respondents disclosed that only few candidates approached them personally and so they voted for him in the absence of an alternative appeal.

Although promises of withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act and solving insurgency problem through political dialogue were the main issues at public meetings and rallies, candidates concentrated on house-to-house campaign with themes of development of local areas. In the face of threats from insurgent groups, no parties held big campaign rallies. Instead, they organized public meetings at the local level. Campaign activities were significantly low this time. Many organizations placed restriction on setting up camps, use of intoxicants and distribution of money, which were usual, practiced in the past. The idea behind was that elections should be less expensive.
In Manipur, regular elections had been conducted since 1952 on the same pattern followed in the rest of the country. It is seen that apart from political parties, there are a number of other organizations and institutions that played an important role in mobilizing people during elections. Thus, it is essential to study these groups role in electoral politics. These include the Chiefs, the youths and church among others.

The institution of Chiefship has been a common traditional feature in many tribal societies. The institution of Chiefship have existed time immemorial almost among the tribal communities in North East India. The Mizos called Hal, the Garos called Nokma, the Tangkhul called Awunga, and the Kukis called Hausa, although the names are different, one common feature about Chiefship is that, generally they possess independent powers and functions though of varied degrees and nature. The Chiefs in Manipur, however are considered to be the supreme in the jurisdiction of their own villages which are an autonomous units governed by the Chief. The Chiefs in Manipur in olden times were considered the owner of all lands and nobody could occupy any land without his permission.

Chapter III found that in Manipur, villages, whether small or large, were governed by village Chiefs. The system of Chiefship was prevalent in almost all the hill tribes of Manipur. Chiefship in Chin-Kuki society is hereditary. From clan to clan, the customs differ as to whether the youngest or the eldest son inherited the office of the father. In most cases, however, the eldest son
inherited the Chiefship. The Kuki system was centralized with chiefs being head of the village and owner of all village land. Chiefs were also entirely supported by their subject villagers for their day-to-day requirements.

Among the Nagas, village administration is run by the village council constituted by the elderly representatives of the clans or households in the village. The village council performs both administrative and judicial functions. The election of councilors is popular and it is customary to give representation to all the clans residing in the villages. Clan heads usually become councilors. Yet, monarchical system of Chiefship is not absent among the Naga tribes—e.g. the Mao, Zeliangrong etc. Among the Kuki-Chin tribes, Chiefs are powerful whereas among the Nagas, though there are Chiefs, they are more democratic and the village is ruled by councilors.

In the hill areas, the electoral behavior is more on community lines. The tribal chiefs influenced the voters and in many cases, they put up their own candidates. The importance of Kuki chiefs in the society could be seen from the fact that Kuki National Assembly (KNA), the first political party of the Kuki, emerged from the womb of the Chiefship organization and almost all the office bearers of the KNA either were the chiefs or connected with chief’s family. During elections, candidates give importance to the chiefs whose houses are selected for election meetings. Sometimes, the chiefs dictate to his villagers the party or candidate they have to vote for. One popular mode of vote campaigning in the hill areas of Manipur is of ‘Boiling tea’ in the Chief’s residence. Very often, the candidates give importance to the chiefs whose
houses are selected for canvassing purposes. Few days ahead of the poll, a particular day is appointed as the day for agent meeting which a grand feast usually followed. Almost all the chiefs from the particular constituency are invited to attend the meeting. The Chiefs were given time to deliver speeches in favouring of a particular candidate or party and highlights the prospects of the candidate or party. Thus, the chiefs play a crucial role in the electoral politics of the state. The study sums up that traditional tribal chief play an important role in mobilizing people during elections. Here it must be mention that 23% respondents cast their vote on the advice of village chief.

The third Chapter also study the role played by the churches in the politics of the state. Reverend William Pettigrew introduced Christianity in Manipur in 1896. Christianity is the second largest religion in the state, accounting for 35% of the population. The hill tribes were largely converted to Christianity in the 19th Century, although some sections of Naga tribes like the Kabui and Rongmei retained their traditional tribal religions.

The study also found that churches did not take direct or active role in politics. The churches held prayer meetings for the avoidance of violence and use of unfair means in the election. Beginning party meetings with a church service or prayer was a common feature. The study found that the influence of church in the electoral politics of this state is not as significant as in other states like Nagaland.
The third Chapter also studied the role of the youth clubs in mobilizing people during elections. Before the advent of Christianity in Manipur, the youth of the north-east had their sleeping house or dormitory where all the young men of the village stay together. In Manipur, Tangkhul called it Longshim; Rongmeis’ called Khangehnu, Hmars’ Buonzawl, Zous’ Sawm. In Arunachal Pradesh, especially in the Siang District there existed a bachelor’s dormitory called Kebang. In Nagaland, they called it Morung, the Garos in Meghalaya called Nokpante, and the Mizo in Mizoram called Zawlbuk.

The dormitory serves as a kind of school where the youngsters learned the art of doing things such as basket making, comb making, cane works and spinning from the seniors. The main functions of the dormitory were defense of the village. All boys attaining puberty must live in dormitory until they were married. It was the village guardroom and the centre of social, religious and cultural life of the tribe. The institution made all-important announcements. It also entertained important visitors to the village; they were to arrange any village feast. They collected firewood, fetched water and distributed meat. Again, through these institutions the feeling of collective unity for their own society was deeply enriched in the minds and thoughts of young people.

With the advent of Christianity and education, the olden days youth dormitory could no longer exist in the original form and were being substituted by different organization, union, associations, etc. In the villages and organizational set-up of the youth community known as youth club, youth Union, youth fellowship etc,
have their own way in politics. The youth clubs in fact carry out many election works.

By engaging in the campaigning process, the youth clubs in the sampled constituencies' undertook the task of giving political education to the electorate. The youth clubs in fact carried out many election works. They assist party workers in giving out the manifestoes, shouting slogan, painting of roads and walls, distribution of pamphlets, pasting of party symbols, etc. In every hill constituencies, massive impersonations were witnessed. At the poll, the highest voter impersonation was seen from the youths. Party workers and youth leaders specially take part in house to house campaigning. Sometimes during election campaign, candidates make promises to certain educated youths that they would be given well-paid Government jobs if they were elected. Therefore, the youth organizations take keen interest in the election campaign of their candidates.

Chapter III found that the tribal chiefs play an important role in mobilizing people during 2002 elections in the hill areas of Manipur. The chapter also found that the influence of church and youth clubs in the electoral politics of the state was not significant though they took part in various forms of campaigning during the elections.

In the fourth Chapter, an attempt was made to study how far the respondents were familiar with current issues of the state, their reaction on the issues and how far their positions on these issues are related to voting choice. The issues
in the state mentioned by the respondents are insurgency, Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), financial crisis, territorial integrity of the state, bandhs, development, corruption, education, and stable government. These issues have been discussed in detail in the fourth chapter. During electioneering, the contesting candidates and political parties emphasized these issues and made repeated pledges and promises about their solution. The percentage of respondents who were able to identify electoral issues works out to 93% of the respondents (Table 4.1). The remaining 7% of the respondents were in the category of ‘Do not know’ and ‘No response’.

To the outsiders, the issue of AFSPA and Nagalim seems to have preoccupied the states, but the study shows it was all round development that was in the minds of the respondents. Majority of the respondents stated that development was the most important issues that need to be acknowledge by every candidates. This chapter attempted to study respondents view on issues in the state. People reaction to issues like insurgency shows that majority of the respondents have rejected the option of suppressing insurgency by any means. As many as 56% respondents have suggested that the issue of insurgency should be solved by negotiations while the rest of the respondents favour using force to crush insurgency. It is also documented that some of the respondents believes corruption, poor economic condition and unemployment is the causes of the increase in the number of insurgent.

The study indicated that the people are not happy of corruption in all spheres of life. Cent percent of the respondents said that public offices are bought and
sold in the state. The respondents also feel that merits and talents are no longer the criteria for government appointments in Manipur. In financial matters majority of the respondents feel that their financial situation has remained the same over the past five years or worsened. Only 10% of the respondents reported of better economic condition. Regarding Bandhs, the study also found that the respondents (55%) are aware of the economic loss of the state during bandhs and road blockages. However, 35% of the respondents confessed that there is no better way to get attention of the government to solve their problems unless bandhs and road blockages are called.

On the issue of political instability, the study found that majority of the respondents (67.5%) is of the opinion that political instability caused by large-scale defection 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'.

On the issue of protecting the territorial integrity of Manipur, majority of the respondents (88%) support 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 be merged with the state of Nagaland.

The study of respondent's reaction on the issue of Armed Forces Special Powers Act shows that the 48.5% of the respondents feel that the Act should
not be scrapped. 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. Further, 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.

Regarding development issue in the state, 39% respondents believe that
insurgency in the state 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. Majority of the respondents (49%) felt
that insincerity on the part of the government is the cause of underdevelopment
in the state. While 12% respondents felt that, the cause of underdevelopment in
the state was due to other reasons such as corruption in awarding
developmental schemes and implementations. The study of respondent’s
reaction on the issue of higher education indicates that the respondents felt
there are many problems associated with higher education in the state. Of
which bandhs and strikes top the list (44%). As many as 29.5% respondents
said that insincerity on the part of teachers is the cause of failure of higher
education in the state. Another 20% respondents believed corruption in the
education department is the cause of many problems associated with education
in the state.
However, table 4.11 clearly shows that the position of the respondents on issues is not related to his voting choice. Precisely because of this, election manifestoes do not matter in the hill areas. This is a negative finding of great significance. While there are considerable issues, familiarity the position on them does not influence crucial voting decisions. Therefore, the conclusion drawn is that issues play no real part in the electoral choice of the hill people in Manipur. In the case of 91% respondents, 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 leaders have also a significant role to play in influencing electoral behavior.

In the fifth Chapter, an attempt was made to measure the degree of political participation, political awareness, political involvement of the voters, exposure to media of communication and voting preferences in order to derive the motivational aspects of the factors responsible for the voting behaviour.

Political participation of the voters was examined from different angles, i.e. turnout, attending election meetings, and campaigning for candidates. Political participation was also examined from membership of various non-political organizations and membership of political parties. In general, it has been found that regarding turnout in voting (85%), the respondents had shown an
appreciable mark of participation but in relation to the activities such as participating in election meetings (52%), canvassing for candidates (20%), membership of political parties (12%) and other voluntary organizations (9%), a vast majority of the respondents was not found participating. This shows that the general population in the hill areas of Manipur does not attach much importance to activities other than casting their votes. Every citizen is not a political activist and hence may not be interested in becoming a member of the political parties and other pressure groups. Further, he may not find it convenient to attend or organize election meetings.

An attempt was also made to measure the degree of political awareness among the respondents of the hill areas of Manipur from various angles. Political knowledge about (1) the important occupants of public offices- Chief Minister, Prime Minister, Governor and President, (2) Identification of political parties, candidates and symbols, (3) problems of locality, state and country and (4) the form of government India practices are the areas where the degree of political awareness of the voters can be systematically measured. As a whole, the political awareness of the voters of the hill areas of Manipur is modest. The respondents were not well aware of the form of government that India practices, the head of the state and national problems, but have sufficient information about the candidates, parties and symbols. Poverty, illiteracy, low standard of education imparted at schools and colleges and weak networks of transport and communication are the main reasons for this phenomenon. Besides, the frequent change of political party by the candidates’ results in their
inability to present political education to the electorate, in tune with their party policies and programmes.

During elections, various media of communication which give political information in general and election news in particular are in full operation to influence the behaviour of the electorate. It is assumed that the media of communication play a significant role in making people politically conscious.

When this aspect was examined, it was seen that 24.5% respondents claimed that they used radio, television and newspapers (Mass Media) as source of political information. Another 44% depended on the use of inter-personal media like discussion with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The same table shows that the remaining voters got information from election-specific media like public meetings, campaigners, candidates and publicity. As a rural society, the respondents were deprived of advantages of mass media largely. In such context, the inter-personal media dominates other form of media as a source of political information. Even the information coming from mass media has to be interpreted through inter-personal media. One of the respondents revealed that people in the villages find it very difficult to comprehend the messages-television and broadcasted because of illiteracy. Moreover, newspapers are very difficult to get in the hill areas and the people equally find it unnecessary to purchase it. Inter-personal media is found to be the most popular source through which the respondents got election specific information.
An attempt has been made to know the campaign exposure of the respondents. Keeping in view the above considerations, the respondents were asked to state (i) whether the candidates or their supporters contacted them during the election campaign, (ii) Whether they attended election meetings, and (iii) Whether they got election information from election specific media. The replies obtained are given below.

It is interesting to note that the contesting candidates contacted 75% of the sample respondents during the election. This indicates that during the assembly elections the respondents were widely contacted. The election meetings are one of the most important media through which the electorates are approached collectively. Concerning election meetings, it was found that 52% of the respondents attended election meetings. Regarding election news, it was found that 29.5% of the respondents got election information through election specific media. Altogether, it has been found that a considerable number of the respondents had an exposure to election campaign. For instance, the contesting candidates contacted 75% respondents. Thus, it can be said that during the assembly elections a sizable part of the electorate happens to acquire political knowledge through media of electioneering.

In the study of voting behaviour, one of the questions, is to find out when exactly the voters decided for whom he is going to vote. In view of the importance of time factor in deciding for whom to vote, the respondents were asked to state when they had decided to vote for a particular party. The data in the table (5.15) indicated that 34% respondents made their voting decision
once the nomination was made. The voters who took their decision as soon as they knew the names of the candidates or parties may be called committed voters. They were committed either to candidates or to political parties. These voters usually do not shift their loyalty from one party to another or for one candidate to another. The rest of the voters who decided later or during the peak of the campaign comprised of floating voters. These voters have considered the candidates qualities, his winning chances, the prospects of the party to come to power and his personal rapport with the public. They are not committed to any political party or any of the candidates. They usually shift their loyalty.

When the campaign started about 21%, respondents made up their mind. They were found to have decided for a candidate after getting campaign stimuli. However, this is a small percentage compared to the number of respondents who have attended election meetings, which is 52% of the respondents. More than 32.5% respondents took their vote decision a few days before the poll. During this period, campaign activities of the candidates would grow more intensive. Generally, the campaign would stop 48 hours before the poll. However, there would be hectic covert activities as attempts were made to contact as many voters as possible. The campaign during this period was marked by secret deals, negotiations, private promises, inducements with money or materials, manipulations and intimidations act. Even on the day of polling 7.5% respondents made up their mind. They were neither committed to parties nor to candidates. The last minute bargaining with candidates, their campaigners and close relatives of the candidates helped them reached their
vote-decision. Then 3% respondents, as the data in the table 5.15 shows, belong to “Don’t know.” They could not tell when they reached their vote-decision. In fact, their vote-decision might have been the result of campaign stimuli or pressure in the last minute encounter. They were the target of the campaigners on the day of polling. The remaining 2% of the respondents belong to the category of “No response.”

The voting behaviour of individuals is determined by various factors. The objective of this investigation is to find the factors conditioning the voting preferences of the respondents. For a further probe, the sample respondents were asked as to what were the immediate reasons, which ultimately decided their vote.

The study found that a considerable number among respondents (23%), who gave reasons of their choice, was influenced by the personality of the candidates. 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. In 54 Nungba constituency, the voters are divided between two important personalities. However, in Tengnoupal constituency, personality has less impact on the mind of the voters. It seems the voters are testing different candidates in each election until they find a suitable one to represent them.
A large number of respondents (30%) were influenced by considerations of tribe, clan, religion and the like of the candidates. In the hills, ethnic loyalties play an important role as factors of voting. Going back to the social history of the tribal in Manipur, villages were formed based on clan and tribe. Along with this, they occupied a particular geographical area demarcating their possession. The village structure, society, and democracy rested mainly on the bonds between clans. This served the purpose of strengthening the bond between the members of the village society. In wider context, the bond that existed between members of the village society drew the tribe members together forming into a cohesive unit. In the modern context, with the formation of state and parliamentary democratic process, the bond and linkages within the tribe remained intact in spite of changes. The main factor that led to this situation was the re-demarcation of district and sub-divisional boundaries according to the geographical area occupied by the tribe. In the political arena, this arrangement suited the tribesmen to collectively support their own leader belonging to their own tribe.

The data in the table 5.16 indicates that 23% respondents made their vote-decision on the advice of the village chief of the village. The system of Chiefship is prevalent in almost all the hill tribes of Manipur. The study found that in the tribal constituencies, the electoral behaviour was more on community lines. The tribal chiefs influence the voters and in many cases, they field their own candidates.
The respondents did not consider political issues relevant. Those who intended to vote based on party consideration remained only 5% of the respondents. Further, 5% of the respondents were influenced by money in reaching their voting decision. The role of money is increasingly becoming a major factor in elections.

Again, the head of the family influenced 10.5% of the respondents. In the tribal community, the family-head enjoyed a high status and extended a dominant influence on the family. To some extent, this set pattern of family relationship was transferred to the political life also. Some respondents (3%) did not know on what grounds they voted showing their lack of interest in elections. In addition, 2% of the respondents belong to the category of “No-response.”

A very significant finding of the study is that the levels of politicization among the hill voters are low. In spite of the high percentage of voting, the rural voters were having a low level of politicization. This was indicated by the influence of the traditional chief and of the family head on the voting of majority of the respondents. Another indicator of low politicization of the hill voters was their preference for the tribe of the candidate. Yet another important indication of the low level of politicization of the hill voters is that issues whether local, regional or national as factors of voting was absent in the sample constituencies. The high non-response of the sample voters to many questions was indicative of their low level of political knowledge. The low level of politicization was again indicated by the fact that loyalty towards parties was not particularly very strong. The evidence from the voting patterns over time supported this.
This low level of politicization of the hill people is a glaring example of the lack of proper functioning of various agents of political socialization particularly the political parties. They only make electoral contact with the voters. There is no permanent office of the political parties in two of the sample constituencies. Party offices only come up during elections. The candidates seem to consider political parties only as a mechanism to contest elections and to get finance. They keep the voters hibernating in between the elections.

The study concludes that electoral politics in the hill areas of Manipur mainly revolves around tribe and clan linkages. This reality could be seen during 2002 elections in the hills. During elections, candidates and their campaigners try their best to influence their relatives first. Then there is continued interaction among the relatives to organize strength for their candidates.