Introduction:

In a democratic political system, elections are the means of ascertaining the consent of the people on the choice of rulers. Elections legitimize the power exercised by government and make the representatives responsible. Elections have assumed significance as hundreds of millions of voters, living under conditions of illiteracy, poverty, backwardness, religious distinction, and inequalities based on caste were called upon to exercise their political right to choose their representatives at the central, state and local levels. To influence the choice of voters the political parties, candidates and campaigners have used varieties of techniques. However, the level of interest and involvement of the voters may differ, as not everybody has the time, energy, resources and interest to make direct and active participation.

Studies on Indian elections acquired significance in the nineteen fifties. However, these studies were influenced by the work done in the field in the United States of America. From 1969 onwards, the Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has been conducting regular election studies. By 1996, a group of social scientists came together under a CSDS programme called *Lokniti* and conducts massive surveys and analysis of survey and aggregate data from socio-economic perspective. From India's northeast a

---

group comprising A.K. Baruah, S. Goswami, K. Debbarma, P. Malngiang and Rajesh Dev among others actively participates in the Lokniti surveys.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

An attempt to study elections in India has been carried out by a number of scholars like Sirsikar who studied the Poona Lok Sabha constituency in the 1967 election using a questionnaire survey of 913 respondents. His analysis showed that the lower the level of education of the family, the higher the influence of the family-head on the voting behaviours of other family members. Moreover, influence of candidate, party loyalty, and caste loyalties influence voting. His analysis showed that the occupation, income, and age of voters, largely, do not influence voting behaviours.

Sachchinanda's *The Tribal Voter in Bihar*, pointed out that in taking a decision to vote for a party or a candidate, the influence of family heads, village and religious leaders, friends, etc. was pronounced.

The political behaviour of Manipur provided by R. P Singh found that party ideology, community, ethnicity, personality of the candidates, role of money, caste and religion are factors of voting in Manipur. Electoral Politics in Manipur by Bhagat Oinam in *Ethnic Identities and Democracy* reveals the influential role of the insurgents in electoral outcomes. The paper also asserts that the election results are a reflection of the failure of the ruling power in the state to deliver the basic social and political goods to the people. However, none of

---

these studies deals with electoral politics in the hill areas of Manipur. The present study is an attempt to understand elections in the hill areas of the state.

OBJECTIVES

(a) To analyze the level of people’s participation in the elections.

(b) To study various issues as reflected in the manifestoes, programmes and election campaigns of various political parties.

(c) To study the role of the church, youth and chiefs in mobilizing the people during elections.

(d) To identify and analyze the various factors that influences the electoral process.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research is based on primary and secondary sources of information. Primary sources of information are collected from Government acts, rules, public documents, manifestoes, and party documents. To supplement the findings, interviews were carried out. Interviews were based on questionnaire, which reflected the general political perceptions, mobilization, and participation of the respondents. The survey was carried out during August to December 2006. The interviews are supplemented by participant observation and informal group discussion methods.

Secondary sources of information on the other are collected from books, reports, thesis, journals, magazines, internet, and other printed materials.

The study employs descriptive survey approach. Technique of purposive sampling is use in selecting the four constituencies (i.e. Tengnoupal, Saikul,
Kangpokpi, and Nungba). After selecting the constituencies, two polling stations are picked up from each constituency for the study. Eight polling Stations are sampled by employing the purposive sampling method. After selecting the polling stations, 25 respondents each from eight polling stations are selected. The electoral roll was used for sampling. Samples of 200 respondents are drawn. The sample is selected on purposive basis.

CHAPTERISATION

1. Electoral Politics and Background of Elections in Manipur.
2. Study of Political Parties, their Manifestoes, Programs and Issues.
3. The Role of Chiefs, Youth and church.
4. Issues and People’s Reactions.
6. Conclusion.

CHAPTER 1 ELECTORAL POLITICS AND BACKGROUND OF ELECTIONS IN MANIPUR

Electoral politics is the study of human behaviour in the area of election politics, the results of various pressures and counter pressures operating on the voters at the time of elections. Electoral politics in a participatory democracy assumes great significance since it is regarded as an index of popular consciousness, articulation and participation of the electorate in the decision making process. Electoral politics, the ideas and actions behind the process of choosing by vote

---

among candidates to govern the state is a vital part of the democratic functioning of the state.

This chapter deals with the analysis of assembly election results beginning with 1972 elections up to 2002. Main issues in each election and the formations of government are also discussed. Issues like inclusion of Manipuri language in the VIII Schedule of the Indian constitution, establishment of a university and a medical college dominated election manifestoes of parties from 1972 to 1990 elections. Stopping human rights violations by the security forces, solving the problem of insurgency, protection of territorial integrity of the state and withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act- AFSPA, 1958 have been an important election issues since 1972 to present day. The analysis of 2002 election results in the sampled constituencies is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER II  STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES, THEIR MANIFESTOES, PROGRAMMES AND ISSUES

In this chapter, an attempt is made to study the manifestoes, programmes, and electoral performances of major political parties in Manipur. In the 2002 elections, the voters in the hill constituencies had extensive choice because except for the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPM), 13 other political parties fielded their candidates, besides the Independent candidates. Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) contested 46 seats and won four, two in the valley, and two in the hills. CPI fielded 16 candidates and winning 5 seats. Congress fielded 58 candidates and won 20 seats, 10 in the

---

12 Ibid
13 Ibid
valley and 10 in the hills, giving the party the largest legislative strength\textsuperscript{14}. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) contested 31 seats and secured three seats. The Manipur People’s Party (MPP), which is a regional party, contested 14 seats and secured just two\textsuperscript{15}, making it the lowest party among the regional parties in terms of seats won in 2002. Federal Party of Manipur (FPM) emerged as the second largest party in the Manipur Assembly Elections, 2002. It fielded 48 candidates and secured 13 seats, 10 in the valley and 3 in the hills\textsuperscript{16}. Samata Party (SAP) contested 31 seats and secured three seats. Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) fielded 42 candidates and won seven seats, five in the valley and 2 in the hill areas\textsuperscript{17}. Three new regional political parties, yet to be recognized by the Election Commission of India (EC) participated in 2002 elections. These are - (i) Democratic Revolutionary Peoples Party (DRPP), Manipur National Conference (MNC), and Naga National Party (NNLP). DRPP set up 23 candidates out of whom two were elected\textsuperscript{18}. MNC won one seat in the elections\textsuperscript{19}. NPP fielded five candidates with no success.

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. 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).

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
A study of the electoral performances of the national and regional parties in the state elections shows that Manipur politics remain dominated by the Congress party. Since March 1972, Manipur mostly had Congress led coalition government under alternating leaders.

This chapter examines the election manifestoes of all major political parties contesting the Eight Assembly Elections. Almost all the political parties took up three issues: (i) law and order, (ii) financial crises and (iii) territorial integrity of the state. On the issue of economic failure, no political party came out with specific measures to tackle financial crisis, such as non-payment of salaries for more than three months to government employees, state overdraft, and generating state revenue. Yet every party included the same in its 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. However, election manifestoes do not play an important role in the electioneering process of the hill areas. One important thing to note here is that the manifestoes were usually absent especially from the side of regional

---

20 The Congress secured the highest number of seats in 1972, 80, 84, 90, 95 and 2002 Assembly Elections.
23 R. P. Singh, Op cit, p. 75.
parties while the national parties do not care to translate these to the local language.

An attempt is also made 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 that were adopted included community feasts, boiling tea in the chiefs' residence, door-to-door campaigning, wall writing\posters, and election meetings.

CHAPTER III. THE ROLE OF CHIEFS, YOUTH AND CHURCH

In Manipur, apart from political parties, there are a number of other organizations and institutions that play an important role in mobilizing people during elections. This chapter examines and analyses the role of Chiefs, Church and Youth clubs in the political life of the people in the hill areas.

The hill people of Manipur still preserve their traditional political system. The chief is the political head of the village and influences the entire socio-political life of the people under his jurisdiction\(^24\). Manipur hill communities are divided into two main groups: Nagas and Kukis. In the Naga village system, the village chiefs enjoy little hereditary authority or rights over land. There usually is a council of village elders to govern the village and resolve disputes\(^25\). The Kuki system, in contrast, is centralised with the chiefs being head of the village and owner of all its land\(^26\). However, common to both the Naga and Kuki system is that the village chief is prominent at all social and religious gatherings and


festivals of the village. Village chiefs and council members are men of influence but not necessarily the wealthiest people. In the tribal belt, the electoral behaviors are more on community lines. The tribal chiefs influence the voters and in many cases, they put up their own candidates. During elections, candidates give importance to the chiefs whose houses are selected for election meetings. Sometimes, the chiefs dictates 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. Here it must be mentioned that 23% respondents cast their vote on the advice of village chiefs.

The hill tribes of the state were largely converted to Christianity in the 19th Century. There are influences on politics, which are caused by the church. The churches and pastors do not directly involve themselves in promoting the interests of a political party or a candidate. However, an implicit consent and support to the candidates of their choice, say of one’s own tribe seems to be inevitable. The churches held prayer meetings for the avoidance of violence and use of unfair means in 2002 elections.

In the villages, the youth community known as youth club have their own way in politics though they usually declare that the concerned organizations will not make any alliance with any political party. During elections youth clubs carry out some election works. Leaders of youth clubs assist party workers in giving

---

27 T C Hobson, *Op cit.* p 545
30 A night of fasting and prayer was called at Imphal on 29 January 2002 for all Christians irrespective of denominations.
out manifestoes, shouting slogans, arranging vehicles, pasting of party posters and arranging election meetings. While conducting house campaigning the candidates are generally followed by leaders of the youth clubs of the locality. 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 some candidates. However, youth club as factor of voting is absent among the respondents.

CHAPTER IV. ISSUES AND PEOPLES' REACTION

Elections are largely influenced by several factors and electoral politics are shaped by the changing position and trends of these factors. Parties convert these factors into election issues and fight the elections. Some issues are more important in elections than others are. Sometimes this happens by accident and sometimes by design. Local issues always influenced the choice of the voters. Political parties try to identify themselves with local issues and thereby secure for itself popular local support.

This chapter examines how far the respondents are familiar with current issues of the locality, state and country. The chapter also attempts to know respondents' reaction on the issues and how far their positions on issues are related to voting choice. The data in table 4.1 show that 45% respondents mentioned the various local issues, which affect them directly. The local issues mentioned by the respondents are clean drinking water, insurgency, irregular

32 N.S.G.Kini, *Opct*, p. 98.
power supply and weak networks of transport and communication. As far as the state issues are concerned 49% respondents mentioned corruption, territorial integrity of the state, bandhs and blockades, AFSPA and insurgency as the most crucial issues that concern them. Concerning national problems, the responses of the respondents are very poor. Only 6% respondents reported corruption as the national problem that concerned them the most. It indicates the orientation of the voters towards the local and state problems.

However, 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. The study clearly shows that the position of a voter on issues is not related to his voting choice.

**CHAPTER V Analysis of survey data: factors influencing electoral behaviour**

In this chapter, an attempt is made to measure the degree of respondents’ political participation, political awareness, exposure to the media of communication, timing of voting decision and voting preferences.

Political participation of the respondents is examined from different angles, i.e. turnout, attending election meetings, membership of political parties and campaigning for candidates. The investigation reveals that concerning turnout in voting (95%), the respondents has shown substantial mark of participation but in relation to other activities such as participating in election meetings (52%), canvassing for candidates (20%), and membership of political parties (9%), the vast majority of the respondents are found not participating. This is because not every citizen is a political activist and he 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 is also made to measure the degree of political awareness among the respondents from various angles. Political knowledge about (1) the occupants of important public offices like Chief Minister, Governor, Prime Minister and President, (2) Identification of the name of political parties, candidates and symbols, (3) the form of government India practices and (4) Knowledge of manifestoes/ideologies of the parties are the areas where the degree of political awareness of the respondents are measured. Table 5.9 shows that 75% respondents do not have the basic knowledge about the structure of government in India. Table 5.10 shows that 58% respondents know the name of the Chief Minister of Manipur, 11% of the Governor of Manipur, 15% of the Prime Minister of India and 6% the President of India. However, 7.5% respondents are not aware of any one of them. The table shows that the respondents are more aware of the head of government rather than the head of the state both at the centre and the state. Table-5.11 shows that 44% respondents could identify the candidates and their party symbol though they do not know them personally whereas 21% could identify the candidates, parties and symbols. About 30% could only identify the candidates. Table 5.12 shows that 25% respondents are aware about party's manifestoes.

The study shows that political awareness of the respondents is average. Poverty, illiteracy, low standard of education imparted at schools and colleges and weak networks of transport and communication may be the reasons for this phenomenon. The responses also show the failure of the political parties as agent of political socialization.
During elections, various media that give political information in general and election news in particular are in full operation. The respondents were asked to reply about the sources through which they receive the daily election news. It is seen that 24.5% respondents claimed that they used radio, television and newspapers as sources of political information. Table 5.14 shows that 44% respondents depend on the use of inter-personal media like discussion with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The same table shows that the remaining respondents got information from election-specific media like public meetings, campaigners, candidates and publicity. The complete picture of the data in the table 5.14 shows that the inter-personal media have an edge of 14.5% over the election-specific media and 20% over the mass media.

As a rural society, the respondents are deprived of advantages of mass media largely. In such context, the inter-personal media dominates other forms of media as a source of political information. Even the information coming from mass media has to be interpreted through inter-personal media. Some of the respondents revealed that many people in the villages find it difficult to comprehend the messages- televised and broadcasted and most of the time there is no electricity. Moreover, newspapers are difficult to get in the hill areas and the people find it unnecessary to purchase it.

In the study of voting behaviour, one of the questions, is to find out when exactly the voters decide for whom he is going to vote. The timing of decision also depends upon the political commitment of the voter and his identification either with political parties or with candidates. The study finds that 34% respondents took their voting decision once the nominations were made and are called committed voters. The rest of the voters who decided later or during
the peak of the campaign comprised of floating voters. They are found to have decided for a candidate after getting campaign motivation.

The voting behaviour of individuals is determined by various factors. For a further probe, the respondents were asked as to what was the most important factor, which ultimately decided their vote. The study found that a considerable number among respondents (22%), who gave reasons of their choice, are influenced by the merits of the candidates. In the sample constituency of Saikul, C. Doungel was elected repeatedly in 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2002 Assembly Elections. This indicates that candidate's personality remained an important factor in attracting the voter's choice overall.

Considerations of tribe or clan of the candidates influences the largest numbers of respondents (30%). In the hills, ethnic loyalties play an important role as factors of voting\textsuperscript{34}. Going back to the social history of the tribal people in Manipur, villages were formed based on clan and tribe\textsuperscript{35}. Along with this, they occupied a particular geographical area demarcating their possession. This served the purpose of strengthening the bond between the members of the village society. In the political arena, this arrangement suited the tribal people to collectively support their own leader belonging to their own tribe. In the absence of major social forces capable of ideologically mobilizing the people, the election results reflect the preferences of the respective tribes in their own areas\textsuperscript{36}. From the above discussion, Myron Weiner's justification that tribal

\textsuperscript{34} S.K.Chaube, \textit{Op. cit.} p. 156
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}
people; in a core reserved tribal constituencies do vote as a bloc\textsuperscript{37} and that the territorial cohesiveness of tribal people enhances their electoral potential\textsuperscript{38} can be justified.

Only 5\% respondents voted based on party consideration. Assembly Elections records show that the importance of party is largely downplayed by other factors like personality of the candidates and tribe affiliations. Loss of party base started in the mid '80s with new forces of money and muscle powers backing the trend of personal cult\textsuperscript{39}. This is borne home by the result of 2002 Assembly Elections. Most of the prominent leaders in the state returned in the Assembly but with a party tag different from their previous ones. In Kangpokpi constituencies, Thangminlen Kipgen was elected constantly from 1990 (INC), 1995 (MPP), 2000 (Nationalist Congress Party-NCP) and 2002 (Federal Party of Manipur-FPM) Assembly Elections.

Another 23\% respondents took their voting decision on the advice of village chiefs. Further, 5\% respondents are influenced by money in reaching their voting decision. Candidates, affluent ones are alleged to have offered money to the voters\textsuperscript{40}. Again, the head of the family influenced 10\% respondents. In the tribal community of Manipur, the family- head enjoy a high status and extend a dominant influence on the family. To some extent, this set pattern of family relationship is transferred to the political life also.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Interview with respondents.
CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the major findings of the study.

A survey of elections in Manipur demonstrates that since the first assembly elections in 1972, every assembly election results have shown that the turnout was high and that there was hung assemblies. The percentage of turnout in 2002 elections was 90.38%. Since 1972 to 2002 only once did a political party get 30 out of 60 Assembly seats i.e., the congress in 1984. After each election, coalition government is the answer.

A significant aspect of electoral politics in Manipur is that it witnessed a small number of woman contestants in every election but female voters always outnumber the male voters. Seven women candidates contested the 2002 assembly elections and just one was elected. In 2002 elections, 682661 females voted in comparison to 648599 male voters. Contributions from respondents suggested that 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.

The study of manifestoes made in Chapter II shows that local issues dominated the 2002 election manifestoes. All the major political parties dealt at length on the same charter of programmes. The Chapter also shows that in the face of threats from insurgent groups, no party held big rallies or processions. The main medium in the campaign carried out by all the political parties was house campaign. Such campaign were held in the evening in order to contact as many as voters as possible.
Chapter III found that the tribal chiefs play an important role in mobilizing people during the elections. Here it must be mention that 23% respondents cast their vote on the advice of village chief. The chapter also found that the influence of church and youth clubs in the electoral politics of the state is not as significant as in other states like Nagaland.

Chapter IV shows that respondents are aware of the issues confronting the locality, state and country and hold opinion on it. However, it is seen that the respondents are more aware of the local and state issues than they are of national ones. Nevertheless, issues do not influence their voting choice. Precisely because of this election manifestoes do not matter in the hill areas.

After analysis of the data gathered from the respondents in the fifth chapter, following conclusions are arrived at:

I. The respondents do not attach much importance to political activities like campaigning for candidates and attending election meetings other than casting votes (Table 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7).

II. The respondents are not well aware of the ideologies and programmes of the political parties (Table 5.12) and are not much ideologically oriented, but have sufficient information about the candidates, parties and symbols (Table 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11).

III. Majority of the respondents depend on inter-personal media as a source of political information during elections (Table 5.14).

IV. Public meetings, wall-writings, election posters, flags, manifestoes, leaflets etc do not influence voting behaviour of the respondents (5.17).
V. Majority of the respondents are not committed voters as they decided their voting choice only a few days before polling day (Table 5.16).

VI. The respondents are influenced by several factors in reaching their voting decisions. Tribe of the candidates, village chiefs, money, personality of the candidates and family head are important factors in the voters’ mind (Table 5.17). As many as 49% respondents are influenced by the tribe of the candidates. That is why all the elected candidates in the sampled constituencies belonged to the major tribe in their respective constituencies.

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.