CHAPTER II

STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES, THEIR MANIFESTOES, PROGRAMMES AND ISSUES

The study of political parties has always been and continues to be central to the understanding of politics. Political parties are the backbone of democracy. Political parties and democracy go hand in hand. Democracy without political parties is unworkable, and political parties without democracy cannot grow.1

Different thinkers have put a number of definitions of political party forward. Michael Curtis says it is difficult to define accurately a political party2. The reason is the views of the liberals and Marxist writers differ sharply on this point. Not only this, even the views of the English liberals differ from their American counterparts.

Some of the definitions given by the writers are as follows. R.G. Gettle defines a political party as “a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of their political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies.”3 Leacock said, “Political Parties means more or less organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit. They share or profess to share the same opinions on public questions, and by exercising their voting power towards a common end, seek to

obtain control of government. They constitute something like a joint stock company, to which each member constitutes his share of political power. They are thus collectively able to acquire the strength which it would have been impossible for them acting singly to obtain."4

Political party is a means for the maximization of political participation. It is one of the axioms of the contemporary science of politics that political party has become an indispensable factor in the working of a representative form of government.5 Political parties have become indispensable factor in the working of a democratic form of government. It lays down the rule that a political party, whether at the national or regional level in one form or another, is omnipresent. This phenomenon also signifies that the electorate has to express their confidence by way of casting their votes either in favor of national or regional political party. Thus, citizens’ commitment to political parties plays an important role for maintenance of a representative system of government. There is however, no constitutional bar as such and a candidate could as well contest as an Independent without the backing of any political party.6

The Constitution of India indicates that India is a federal polity with a central government in New Delhi, and state governments for the various States and Union Territories. Consequently, political parties in India are classified as national and state (regional) parties based on their realm of influence. National parties are those that are recognized in four or more states. They are accorded this status by the Election Commission of India, which periodically reviews the

---

6 J. C. Aggarwal and N. K. Choudhury, Elections in India, Shipra Publication, Delhi, 1983, p. 46
This recognition helps the political parties to claim unique ownership of certain identities, such as the party symbol, until the next review of their status. Parties that have received a certain amount of votes or seats in a state might be recognized as a state party by the Election commission. Recognition as a state party gives the party the possibility to reserve a particular election symbol in the concerned state. To gain recognition as a state party, the party must have some kind of political activity for at least five continuous years, and send at least 4% of the state’s quota to the Lok Sabha (India’s Lower house), or 3.33% of members to the state assembly. If the above conditions are not fulfilled, then a party may gain recognition by garnering not less than 6% of the total votes in a state or national election, polled in by all its contesting candidates.7

In Manipur, the existing political parties may be classified into two categories-National Political Parties and Regional Political Parties. The dominant National political parties are the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress (INC), the Janata Dal (U) and the Communist Party of India (CPI). The dominant Regional or State Political Parties are the Manipur Peoples’ Party (MPP), the Manipur state Congress Party (MSCP), and the Federal Party of Manipur (FPM).

The Eighth Assembly Elections in Manipur was held on 14th and 21st February 2002. There were as many as 15 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). These political parties have their separate programmes, aims, and objectives. Let us first deal with National Political Parties:

**Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**

The BJP can be described as a successor of the old Bharatiya Jana Sangh Party. It was in October 21, 1951 that several leaders of the Rastriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) and Hindu Mahasabha, acting under the leadership of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. This party merged with the Janata Party in 1977. However, within a short period there appeared a dislike within the Janata Party against the Jana Sangh members because of their links with the RSS. Erstwhile Jana Sangh members left the Janata Party and on April 6, 1980, formed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its President.

---

Programmes of the BJP

The BJP is a cadre-based well-organized political party with a definite ideology. It identifies itself with Hinduism but explains its meaning as Indianess\(^{10}\). The party stands for decentralization of economic and political power. It is opposed to the political appeasement to any community. It seeks to make India a Ram Rajya- a welfare state committed to secure the welfare of all the people of India. However, its several slogans like 'Indianisation of Muslims' and 'Hindu Rashtra' have influenced several people to call it a communal party\(^{11}\).

Performance of the BJP in Manipur

For the first time, in 1984, the BJP took part in the fourth Assembly Elections in Manipur. The party contested 13 seats but failed to secure even a single seat.\(^{12}\) In the 1990 Assembly Elections also, the party failed to capture any seat though it fielded 16 candidates.\(^{13}\) The performance of the party in the elections of 1995 improved; the party secured a seat in this election.\(^{14}\) In the Assembly Elections in 2000, the performance of the party was better than the last election. The party secured 6 seats in this election.\(^{15}\)

\(^{10}\) Ibid.
\(^{11}\) Ibid
\(^{13}\) Government of Manipur, *Election Index Card*, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 1990
\(^{15}\) Government of Manipur, *Election Index Card*, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 2000
In the 2002 Assembly Elections, the Party contested 46 seats and won four, two in the valley, and two in the hills. Its share of total votes was 9.55 per cent. Out of the Party’s 42 defeated nominees, 36 lost their security deposits\(^{16}\).

Communist Party of India (CPI)

The date maintained as the foundation day by CPI is 26\(^{th}\) December 1925. To date, CPI happens to be the only national political party from India to have contested all the general elections using the same electoral symbol\(^{17}\). In Manipur, H. Irabot Singh imitated the Communist Party of India (Manipur) which was established on the 29\(^{th}\) October 1948.

Programmes of the CPI

It is in the economic field where the policies and programmes of this party are very important. It desires to bring about scientific socialism by securing the elimination of foreign monopolies, annulment of all collaborative agreements, taking over by the state of all foreign trade, effective measures to curb the monopolists and to break up big monopoly houses, replacement of the Five Year Plan by people’s plans, nationalization of all scheduled banks, overhauling of the entire tax structure, abolition of land revenue and its replacement by tax on agricultural income with exemption to all uneconomic holdings, reorganization and democratization of the public sector, assurance of minimum

\(^{16}\) Government of Manipur, *Election Index Card*, Office of the chief Electoral Officer, Imphal. 2002

need-based wage, introduction of far-reaching land reforms and the like. The CPI has full faith in peaceful means and believes that revolution in India can be achieved by co-operating with other democratic forces.

Performance of the CPI in Manipur

The CPI contested the elections in Manipur for the first time in 1952. The party won two seats out of six it contested. In the election of 1957, the CPI fielded candidates in 17 constituencies but could win only four seats. In 1962, the CPI was completely routed. The party could not win even a single seat out of 14 seats it contested. In the Assembly Election of 1967, the CPI fielded candidates in 6 constituencies. The CPI's performance was still very poor, only one of its nominees could win the electoral battle by securing 5.47 per cent of the votes polled. In the assembly election of 1972, the party contested in 25 seats and managed to secure 5 seats. The CPI won 6 seats and 5 seats in 1974 and 1980 elections respectively. The next election was held on December 27, 1984. The CPI secured 1 seat out of 17 that it contested. In the 1995 elections, the party won 2 seats. However, in the election of 2000 the CPI could not secure any seat.

---

19 *Government of Manipur, Election Results, Office of the CEO, Imphal,* 1952.
20 *Government of Manipur, Election Results, Office of the CEO, Imphal,* 1957.
21 *Government of Manipur, Election Results, Office of the CEO, Imphal,* 1962.
22 *Government of Manipur, Election Results, Office of the CEO, Imphal,* 1967.
23 *Government of Manipur, Election Results, Office of the CEO, Imphal,* 1972.
In 2002, Assembly Elections CPI fielded 16 candidates and won 5 seats. The party did not participate in the hill districts' constituencies during the 2002 elections. The CPI has never fielded their candidate in the hill constituencies. The state CPI gets its strength from its devoted workers like the labour class, the government employees, and the students who have been supporting the party.

**Indian National Congress (INC)**

The party has been one of the most successful of the nationalist movements of Asia and Africa. Founded by A. O. Hume in 1885, it struggled for the liberation of India from Britain and continued to dominate the national political scene up to the 1967 elections.

**Programmes of the INC**

The main aim and objective of the party is to establish a socialist society in which both the public and private sectors will be allowed to work together for the country's economic development. Agriculture will be given maximum attention. In the field of foreign affairs, the party stands for non-alignment and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. On Gandhian principles, the party believes in non-violence and encouragement of small scale
and cottage industries on the one hand and co-operative farming on the other.\(^{31}\)

**Performance of the Congress in Manipur**

The Congress party contested the election of 1952 and secured 10 seats. The Congress party did not participate in the electoral battle in the hills except in Churachandpur constituency where a Kuki National Assembly nominee defeated its candidate.\(^{32}\) In the Territorial Council election of 1957, the Congress Party contested all 30 seats but secured only 12 seats.\(^{33}\) The Congress Party’s performance was the best among the political parties contesting the elections as the party captured half of the Territorial Council seats. In 1967 elections, the Party managed to get 16 of 30 seats. The Congress Party later on admitted two nominated members and 7 Independent members to its fold and formed the government, under the leadership of Koireng Singh.\(^{34}\) However, as the hostility in the party grew over the sharing of ministerial positions, the Koireng ministry collapsed. As a result, the centre took control over the state. The dissident group left the party and formed a new party called the Manipur Peoples Party. Such development changed the political scenario of the state. The Congress Party became unpopular. The image of the party was also tarnished because of its late participation on the movement for statehood.

\(^{31}\) Indian Elections.com\party profiles/congress.html, 8-9-07.
In the Assembly Elections of 1972, the Congress had to be satisfied with only 17 seats of 60 seats\(^{35}\). In 1974, the state went through mid-term elections. The Congress Party fought the election in alliance with the CPI in the valley. The party contested 49 seats and secured 12 seats\(^{36}\). The next Assembly Elections was held on January 1980. The Congress secured 13 seats\(^{37}\). The party forged a coalition with the Congress (U) and MPP after admitting most of the Independents under its fold and formed the Ministry led by R.K. Dorendro Singh on January 17, 1980. The next Manipur Assembly Election was held in 1984. The Congress contested all the 60 seats and secured 30 seats. The assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 brought sympathy for the Congress party and it was clearly visible in the elections result. The party won an absolute majority formed the government with Rishang Keishing as the Chief Minister.\(^{38}\) In the next Assembly Elections of 1990, the Congress emerged as the single largest party by securing 25 seats out of 60 contested. However, the Congress became the opposition party in the House\(^{39}\) The United Legislature Front (ULF) formed the coalition ministry with R.K. Ranbir Singh as Chief Minister on February 23\(^{rd}\), 1990. However, the ULF coalition could not provide a stable government due to internal strife. The result of such internal strife enabled the Congress to take over power for some time. However, the Congress led coalition also could not survive due to ethnic violence in the state between the


Kuki and the Naga. This led to the imposition of President's Rule in the state on December 31, 1993. The President's Rule continued for 346 days. It ended on December 12, 1994. On December 13, 1994, Rishang Keishing (Congress) replaced R.K. Dorendro Singh as Chief Minister.

The next General Elections were held on February 16 and 19, 1995. In this election, Congress secured 22 seats\textsuperscript{40} and formed a coalition ministry under Rishang Keishing (Congress) as Chief Minister on February 25, 1995. However, the Keishing coalition ministry lasted for 35 months. The internal bickering within the party resulted into a split. The breakaway group led by W. Nipamacha Singh formed a new political party (Manipur State Congress Party) and later on, this party formed the government. The next Assembly Elections was held in 2000. In this election, the Congress secured 11 seats\textsuperscript{41}. Following the fast-paced switching of political loyalties in the state, the new government could not last long and the state was once again brought under President's Rule.

In 2002 election, the Congress fielded 58 candidates and won 20 seats, 10 in the valley and 10 in the hills, giving the party the largest legislative strength\textsuperscript{42}. The Party formed the United Progressive Front under the leadership of O. Ibobi Singh. The Congress has been a major actor in the politics of Manipur since

1952. From time to time, the Congress Party suffered electoral setback due to splits or defections.

JANATA DAL (JD)

The resignations or expulsion of some of the Congress (I) leaders from the party in 1989 gave an impetus to the formation of an alternative party to the congress (I). On October 11, 1989, a new party known as the Janata Dal came into being with the merger of three parties i.e., Janata Party, Jan Morcha and Lok Dal under the leadership of V.P. Singh.

Programmes of the JD

The policies and programmes of the JD includes the eradication of corruption in politics; reforming the electoral system so as to avoid money and muscle power; strengthening centre-state relations; justice to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes; giving special attention to the betterment of the women among others.

Performance of the JD in Manipur

The JD for the first time entered into the Manipur Assembly Electoral fray in 1990. In this election, the JD fielded candidates in 52 constituencies. The party

44 Ibid
secured 11 seats and took part in the formation of the government under the United Legislative Front with R K Ranbir Singh as the Chief Minister.

In the next Assembly Elections, which was held on February 1995 the JD secured 7 seats, 3 in the hills and 4 in the valley. In the Assembly elections held in 2000, the JD suffered a setback. Only two seats could be captured, one seat by the Janata (S) and one seat by Janata (U).

**Regional Political Parties**

With reference to North-East India, L S Gassah pointed out that many of the regional political parties at the initial stage were set up only as pressure groups. In general, the aims of such groups were mainly to achieve social and economic goals and for the welfare of the people. Their initial formation was also because of the need that was felt necessary to protect and preserve the customs, traditions, customary laws, language, religion, and the distinct identity of their own section of the society.

It is generally said that regional political parties are parochial, anti-national and a disintegrating factor. National political leaders also used to level charges that such parties do not adopt positive and constructive attitude towards...
national problems. On the contrary, it must be said to the credit of the regional parties that they provided political stability, efficient government and continuity. As the regional parties are in a position to understand the regional problems and grievances of the people better and in this way they succeeded in developing the region and delivered the goods.\textsuperscript{50}

Some of the important regional political parties in Manipur are:

**MANIPUR PEOPLES’ PARTY (MPP)**

The MPP, at the outset, was an offshoot of the defectors of the Indian National Congress (INC). It was formed on December 26, 1968.

**Programmes of the MPP**

The party’s main objective is to achieve the well-being and advancement of the people of Manipur and to establish an egalitarian society based on democratic socialism and in particular\textsuperscript{51}.

**Performance of the MPP**

The MPP for the first time entered into electoral politics in 1972. Almost all the parties, including the MPP, threw a challenge to the Congress and rallied around the banner of anti-Congresses'.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

If we examine and analyze the history of the MPP, we find that it was most popular during the early 1970s. There was a strong wave of the party among the people in the valley. That was the main reason why the party was able to form the Ministry in 1972, just after the attainment of statehood. In fact, it was the Congress, which secured the largest number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur after the General elections of 1972. However, feeling the pulse of the people, most of the Independent M.L.As joined and supported the party in the formation of government. The MPP had a good beginning in the initial years but since 1980, it started declining. However, the MPP is the only local party, which could form ministry twice in Manipur, (1972 and 1990) with the support of other parties.

The MPP contested 14 seats and secured just two, making it the lowest party among the regional parties in terms of seats won in 2002. Its share of popular votes was 3.03 per cent. The party could not win any seat in the hill constituencies. Though the party claimed to be a statewide organization, it had proved its influence only in the valley and over the Meiteis. Eight of its defeated nominees lost their security deposits.

---

The Federal Party of Manipur was formed under the leadership of Prof. Gangmumai Kamei on October 21, 1993. The constitution of the party clearly specifies the objectives of the party.

Programmes of the FPM

The Federal Party of Manipur (FPM) stands for the following objectives:

1. To promote economic development through planning, freedom from exploitation, social control over the natural resources, encouragement of private enterprises, involvement of foreign capital and full participation of the people in the process of planning and implementations of development process as in the state.

2. To promote the common heritage of the various sections of the Manipuri’s population and protect their cultural and ethnic identity and territorial integrity of the state.

Performance of the FPM

The FPM fought the Assembly Election for the first time in 1995. The Party fielded 22 candidates but only 2 candidates were elected. They were Prof. Gangmumai Kamei and Dr. W. Thoiba Singh. In the next Assembly Elections

---

held in 2000, the FPM secured 6 seats.\textsuperscript{56} This shows their improvement as compared to the previous election. The party made an alliance with the MSCP and formed the United Front Government.

The FPM emerged as the second largest group in the Manipur Assembly Elections, 2002. It fielded 48 candidates and secured 13 seats, 10 in the valley and 3 in the hills\textsuperscript{57}. The FPM captured the only reserved Scheduled Caste constituency of Sekmai.

\textbf{MANIPUR STATE CONGRESS PARTY (MSCP)}

The defected Congress members under the leadership of W. Nipamacha Singh formed the MSCP on December 1997. The political crisis within the Rishang Keishing Ministry was the main reason for the split of the Congress Party.

\textbf{Programmes of the MSCP}

The objectives of the Manipur State Congress Party are as follows:

1) To bring welfare and justice-social and economic to the people irrespective of caste, tribe, religion, creed, etc;

2) To propagate and bear true faith and allegiance to the constitution of India.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{56} Government of Manipur, \textit{election Index Card}, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Imphal, 2000


Performance of the MSCP

Since the establishment of the MSCP as a political party, it has actively participated in the political activities of the state. The first MSCP led ministry was sworn in on December 16, 1997 under the Chief Ministership of W. Nipamacha Singh. Thus, the MSCP led coalition ministry is the second regional political party next to the MPP that have set up a non-Congress (i) government. In the Assembly Elections of 2000, the MSCP secured 23 seats and the second MSCP led coalition Government was installed under the leadership of W. Nipamacha Singh. During the MSCP reign, the financial condition of the state was very bad. The government could not even pay the salary of the government employees regularly and the result was that the government had signed an MOU with the central government for total ban on recruitment of job. The impact of the agreement was faced by many young educated youths and it affected the party’s electoral performance. In 2002 Assembly Elections, the party fielded 42 candidates and won seven seats, five in the valley and 2 in the hill areas.

KUKI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (KNA)

The KNA had its genesis as a regional political party in 1946 to meet the growing demands of the Kuki community and with an objective to safeguard the interest of the Kukis in a rapidly changing political atmosphere in the hills. The

---

educated elite of the Kukis founded the party on April 24, 1946. The KNA is the only tribal political party in Manipur recognized by the Election Commission of India.

**Programmes of the KNA**

The party aims to bind together all the Kukis living in different states of India and establish a homeland for the Kuki tribe. It stands for the composite culture of the Kukis and freedom from external exploitation. The party supports the idea of regionalism.61

**Performance of the KNA**

For the first time, the KNA participated in the 1952 Electoral College Elections. The party fielded 7 candidates and could secure 2 seats in the hill constituencies.62 After 1952 elections, the party remained in a state of dormancy until the late 1960s. In the 1972 State Assembly Elections, the party failed to capture any seat out of two seats they contested63. In the next midterm Assembly Elections of 1974, the party entered into an election alliance with the MPP and Manipur Hills Union. The results were quite positive as the party captured 2 out of 6 seats that it contested64.

---

64 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal. 1974
In 1980, Assembly Elections the party had contested in 7 constituencies but captured only 2 seats. In the Assembly Elections of 1984, the party had contested in 4 constituencies but only one candidate was elected. In the 1990 Assembly Elections, 8 candidates contested in the election, two were elected. The KNA joined in the formation of 1990 coalition government led by the Congress and one candidate of the party got a cabinet berth. However, in the Assembly Elections of 1995, the party put up 6 candidates but none were elected. In the Elections of 2000, the party contested in only one constituency but the party failed to capture the seat. The party did not contest in 2002 elections.

Three new regional political parties, yet not recognized by the Election Commission of India (EC) participated in the 2002 elections. These were - (i) Democratic Revolutionary People's Party (DRPP), Manipur Nationalist Conference (MNC), and Naga National Party (NNP). Social activists, human rights activists, and former students' union leaders with the ideal of a "New Manipur" formed the Democratic Revolutionary Peoples' Party (DRPP). The DRPP set up 23 candidates in the state assembly elections in 2002 out of whom two were elected. In total, the party received 51,916 votes. After the elections, the party joined the Secular Progressive Front led by the Congress.

MNC was formed in 2002 when a split occurred in the MSCP. Two competing factions struggled over being recognized as the authentic MSCP. In the end,

---

65 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 1980  
66 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 1984  
67 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 1990  
68 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 2000  
69 Government of Manipur, Election Index Card, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Imphal, 2002
the Election Commission recognized the Th. Chaoba-led group as the real MSCP. W. Nipamacha Singh then re-christened his group as ‘MNC’. In the 2002 state assembly elections, MNC supported SPF. MNC won one seat in the elections.\textsuperscript{70}

Another party called the Naga Peoples' Party (NPP) was also formed for advocating the rights of the Nagas in Manipur. NPP works amongst the Naga minority in the state. The party favors negotiated settlements of the conflicts in the Northeast, unification of Naga groups and maintaining Naga identity. The president of NNP was Ng. Hungyo. The party fielded five candidates with no success. All the nominees lost their security deposits. The party’s share of popular votes was 0.05 percent.

In the 2002 elections, the voters in the hill constituencies had extensive choice because, except for the CPI and CPM all other political parties fielded their candidates. A large number of independent candidates, representing the tribal groups contested the elections.

**MANIFESTOES**

This chapter also explores the implications of ideological battle amongst the political parties of Manipur as reflected in their manifestoes in the election of 2002. Ideology, to many people means the doctrine that political parties are committed to or which they use in their endeavor to get power and influence. In

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
this sense, it is deliberately formulated and exploited. Parties appeal to some
class or sections more than others do, and, their doctrine, if they are to be
attractive, must be in keeping with the belief, attitudes and aspirations of those
classes or sections\(^7\).

The study of the manifestoes is the key to understanding the various problems,
mainly of developmental nature and the ways and means of finding a rational
solution to them as viewed by different parties. Significant issues, pointers and
divergent approaches to manifold issues in the manifestoes help one in
understanding the mind of the parties. The way the voters' behave and react in
response to the issues raise in it, is a very important and engaging subject of
discussion among political sociologists.\(^7\)

A brief study of the manifestoes of the main parties provides a clue to the
understanding of the election situation and the strategy and tactics of the
parties. The manifesto tells the public what a party's policies and priorities are
and thus enables them to vote in a policy-oriented way for the ones they favor.

All the major political parties dealt at length on the same charter of programmes
as listed below.

(1).**Territorial**

Safeguarding the boundaries of Manipur has been a sensitive issue ever since
the state saw widespread violence in 2001 when then prime minister Atal Bihari
Vajpayee agreed to extend the truce with the Isak-Muivah faction of the

National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) beyond Nagaland into Manipur. At least 20 people were killed in the unrest. The State Assembly was set on fire by mobs belonging to the majority Meitei community, angry over Vajpayee's decision to allow the NSCN-IM a free run in Manipur. While the estimated 400,000 Nagas in the state are siding with the demand for a 'Greater Nagaland', a concept mooted by the NSCN-IM, the majority Meiteis are opposed to any fragmentation of the state. The NSCN-IM, a rebel group in adjoining Nagaland, wants a 'Greater Nagaland' by slicing off parts of neighbouring Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh that have sizeable Naga population. The United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of the Nagas residing in four districts in Manipur, favours integrating Naga-inhabited areas with Greater Nagaland.73

Ultimately, the Government of India (GOI) had to roll back the agreement and ceasefire agreement between NSCN (IM) and the GOI was confined to the state of Nagaland only. However, Manipur's majority Meitei community remains suspicious. They fear Manipur's Naga-inhabited areas may be parceled off to Nagaland in a peace deal with the main rebel group, the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM).

The question of territorial integrity of the state was an emotive and politically crucial agenda in the state. This issue also invited involvement of the insurgents in the elections. The issue of territory also played a crucial role in the elections in the hills, as tribes belonging to the broad conglomerations of the

73 http://www.c-pao.net/election02/party-manifestos.asp. 9-9-07.
Nagas and the Kukis expectedly voted on ethnic lines. In the valley, protecting the territorial integrity of the state turned out to be one of the major issues of political debate. There was not a single party that could afford to ignore the territorial issue. The new political party, Democratic Revolutionary Peoples' Party (DRPP), mainly harped on this agenda.

For parties like the Congress, the FPM, and the DRPP, Manipur territorial integrity was the most important issue in their manifesto. The Congress 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 pledged to protect and preserve the territorial integrity of Manipur.

(2) Armed Forces Powers Act (AFSPA): AFSPA has, once again, become the most controversial issue in this election. Under this Act, security forces were given unrestricted and unaccounted power to carry out their operations, once an area is declared disturbed areas. Even a non-commissioned officer is granted the right to shoot to kill based on mere suspicion that it is necessary to do so in order to maintain public order. As expected, every political party has promised to repeal AFSPA if elected to power. Despite promising the removal of AFSPA, none of the political parties has chalked out a blueprint to remove the Act. The purpose of imposing the Act is to curb insurgency in the state. Instead, insurgency was increasing in the state.

---

74 The Election Manifesto of the BJP Manipur, Imphal, 2002, p. 1
The law and order situation in the state, both in the hill areas and the valley, was seriously deteriorated. The Congress pledges to give the highest priority to peace. It said that it would engage in a detailed dialogue with the centre to prepare a package of measures to bring about security in all parts of the state and a political settlement, which addresses all genuine concerns. On the law and order situation, the BJP's manifesto said it would make an effort to end insurgency problem, improve the condition of the State police, and set up women police stations in all districts. Manipur State Congress Party (MSCP) aims to make sincere and pragmatic efforts to initiate direct and meaningful talks with leaders of the underground outfits. The FPM said that militants should not be treated as terrorists. It stated that negotiations were the only way to bring a lasting solution. The FPM also demanded political prisoner's status for militants when arrested and imprisoned. While parties have announced that doors are opened for dialogue with undergrounds, they have never made a serious effort to initiate the talks. There is no proper and adequate rehabilitation package of the surrendered undergrounds in Manipur.

(3) Environment: Only a few political parties laid stress in their respective election manifestos on the issue of maintaining the ecology and a clean environment. Even if parties like DRPP, CPI and JD (S) promises to formulate a comprehensive plan to check pollution, they put the issue almost at the bottom of the priority list. It is unbelievable that major parties like Congress and MSCP

---

76 The Manifesto of Indian National Congress, Vidhan Sabha Elections 2002, Manipur, Imphal. p. 3
77 http://www.e-pao.net/election 02\Bhartya- Janata- party-manifesto. Asp. 7-10-07.
78 http://www.e-pao.net/election 02\Manipur-State-Congress-party-manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
79 http://www.e-pao.net/election 02\Federal-party-of-manipur-manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
did not mentioned about protection of the fast deteriorating environment in the State.

The NCP says it would protect forest as a measure to control flood. The BJP said that the present drainage and sewage schemes in Imphal and other towns will be recast and a project would be taken up to clean its water. The MPP takes the pledge to take up a master plan for Imphal city. A look into the manifestos states that majority of the parties are yet to realize the seriousness of the threat posed by environment pollution in Manipur Imphal city.

No Government since Manipur attained statehood has paid attention to the issue of environment. The result is everywhere. A large percentage of the hills have now become barren. As a result, flood has become a yearly phenomenon, destroying crops and livestocks extensively.

On the top of this, the polythene and plastic bags have posed a serious threat. While all the political parties promised development of all kinds like better health care facilities, more productivity in agricultural sector, industrial revolution, development of the hills and supply of safe drinking water to all, only a few talk about the need to check pollution. While thinking of industrial advancement and progress, one should also keep in mind the need to control air, water, and sound pollution.

---

80 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Nationalist_Congress_party_manifesto.asp, 7-10-07.
81 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Bharatiya_Janata_party_manifesto.asp, 7-10-07.
82 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Manipur_Peoples_party_manifesto.asp, 7-10-07.
(4) Corruption: The people of Manipur have been plagued by the worst corruption taking place at different levels. The election manifesto of the BJP promises to free the state from the triple curses- hunger, fear, and corruption- besides vowing to provide a clean Government and a free hand to CBI in corruption cases. MPP in its election manifesto promised a corruption free Government by passing the Lok Ayukta Act, which aims at checking corruption in high places. The new entrant DRPP organized torch rallies against corruption. Likewise all other parties promised to stamp out corruption.

(5) Stable-government: The Congress in its manifesto and election campaign emphasized on the desirability of a stable government in the state. It made an appeal to the people for political stabilization of the state by voting the Congress into power as it has shown stability in the past. The Congress stated that a political culture of defection for personal profit has been promoted by the BJP and the SP, on the one hand, and by regional parties, on the other hand. The other parties countered the Congress for creating the present deadlock and instability because of its long period of misrule.

The CPI in its manifesto promised to fight against defection. The CPI would galvanize public opinion on this score. MPP called for checking defections by amending the Anti-Defection Law. The SP said the political parties, which did

---

84 http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Janata_parliamentary_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
85 http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Manipur_Peoples_party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
86 http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
87 http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Communist_Party_of_India_manifesto.asp. 8-10-07.
88 http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
not encourage defections needed to come together in a post poll alliance and provide a stable government\textsuperscript{89}.

On the other hand, the fractured mandate has accentuated the already existing deep-rooted political crises. While no party is in a position to execute its party agenda, all that was witnessed was the politicking where each party and individual M. L. As were engaged in tying and untying the knots of political alliance. In the process, governance was neglected. Lack of governance has led to the creation of several socio-political crises being magnified into giant size macro-level issues. The solution lies in political stability. This can be maintained only with a new legislation that will strongly check horse-trading and frequent shift of party loyalty.

(6) AIDS: Manifestoes of various state parties for the eighth Manipur Assembly elections have laid considerable emphasis on dealing with HIV/AIDS. For the first time in the country, perhaps HIV/AIDS has become an election issue. With the number of HIV positive cases increasing in the state at an alarming rate, parties can no longer neglect the problem. The newly formed political party DRPP, which in its manifesto, promised maximum autonomy to the Manipur AIDS Control Society, has taken the lead subsidizing medicines and allotting more funds to NGOs working in the sector\textsuperscript{90}.

Former minister and president of Manipur Peoples' Party, Mr. O. Joy Singh, felt the issues should be above party politics. Mr. Singh has mooted an idea of

\textsuperscript{89} http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Samata_Party_manifesto.asp_7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{90} http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Democratic_People's___party_manifesto.asp_7-10-07.
forming cells within the party structure to spread awareness of the danger of
the disease among people. The Congress has put AIDS on its top priority list
and so has all the other political parties. The BJP in its manifesto has called for
restructuring of the state AIDS and drug programmes to make them more
effective.

Coming to the matter of health care, BJP manifesto said it would
encourage and streamline the age-old medical system practiced by maibas and
maibees who are the traditional priests and priestess of the Meitei Hindus and
promised to upgrade health facilities in the hill areas. JD (U) said it would set up
more primary health centers if given the chance to govern. The Congress will
give top priority to HIV-AIDS prevention and care, including tackling the
problem of drug abuse through which the dreaded disease is spreading through
the state. The party will also give special attention to primary health centers and
implementation of family welfare programmes.

(7) Education: The Congress claimed that it did not merely emphasises on
qualitative standard in education but would follow the path of equalitarianism in
educational opportunities to all sections of the people so that the existing socio-
economic disparities are not perpetuated in the educational attainment and
intellectual caliber of the younger generation. The Congress also promised the
conversion of Manipur University and Regional Institute of Medical Sciences to
the central university and institute respectively and approaching the Union

91 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
92 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Biplavinya_Janata_party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
93 http://www.e-pao.net/election/02/Janata Dal_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
Government to open examination centers in Manipur for admission to academic courses in National Institute of higher studies and professional courses\(^5\). The CPI manifesto urged upon better pay scale and adequate facilities for teachers, and an adequate representation in the administrative bodies of educational institutions\(^6\). The MPP urged upon the declaration of the State Policy of new education with a thrust on the depth of science and technology\(^7\). BJP manifesto said it is committed to convert Manipur University into a Central University. The government college of technology is the only engineering institute in Manipur and owing to financial constraints, the college still lacks infrastructure like adequate number of qualified staff, computing resources, internet facilities etc. that are essential in modern world technology. The remedy lies in upgrading the college to the status of Regional Institute of Technology under the funding of the North-Eastern Council\(^8\). In short, almost all the political parties stressed on conversion of Manipur University into a central university.

(8) **Unemployment:** The BJP pledged to introduce special employment scheme for the educated unemployed\(^9\). The DRPP has a plan for generating employment for about 50,000 youth by implementing new projects based on the existing natural resources of the state\(^10\). MNC promised to solve the problems in appointment of teachers of higher secondary schools and

---

\(^7\) [http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp](http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp). 7-10-07.
\(^8\) [http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Bharatiya_Janata_party_manifesto.asp](http://www.e-pao.net/election_02/Bharatiya_Janata_party_manifesto.asp). 7-10-07.
colleges\textsuperscript{101}. The Congress party has stated its concern for unemployment among the educated youths and the CPI stressed upon modernization of agriculture and industrialization to tackle problem\textsuperscript{102}. The JD (U) manifesto laid emphasis on the establishment of medium scale industries so as to eliminate unemployment problem among the youths\textsuperscript{103}.

(9) **Sports:** All the major political parties stood on the common plank in the field of games and sports, women’s rights, youth, etc. The Congress said efforts would be made to ensure playgrounds in all localities, attached to schools or panchayats and mini-stadiums at district headquarters. A reservation in government employment for sports persons and benevolent fund for outstanding sports persons was included\textsuperscript{104}. The manifesto of BJP said it would evolve a policy for talent-hunt in sports by using modern scientific equipments and provide more facilities of games and sports to all districts. The party further promised to open more SAG (Special Area Game) Centers to provide training to more talented players in selected disciplines in all districts\textsuperscript{105}.

(10) **Economic problems:** The Congress party’s economic programme for the state focused on infrastructure development, in particular a ring road, which will link all the district headquarters directly; the extension of the National Super Highway from Silchar into Manipur; and the extension of the railway network into the state\textsuperscript{106}.

\textsuperscript{101} http://www.c-pao.net/election/02/Manipur_National_Conference_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{102} http://www.c-pao.net/election/02/Communist_Party_of_India_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{103} http://www.c-pao.net/election/02/Janata_Dal_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{104} The Manifesto of Indian National Congress. Vidhan Sabha Elections, 2002, Manipur. Imphal, pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{105} http://www.c-pao.net/election/02/Bharatiya_Janata_party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
Janata Dal (U) said the party would work for bettering the economic conditions of Manipur by seeking foreign investment and utilizing natural resources properly and take up new road projects in both hill and valley. The party said it would work for making Manipur an international trade centre by regulating and enhancing the existing trade between the state and south East Asian countries\textsuperscript{107}. The NCP would give emphasis on the economic development of the state, and would work towards proper implementation of various centrally sponsored schemes\textsuperscript{108}. The MSCP envisages on the economic problems faced by Manipur in adopting short and long-term measures improving the economic conditions of farmers, weavers, and laborers\textsuperscript{109}. The MPP state will bring about better implementation of the Essential Commodities Act to check price hike of commodities\textsuperscript{110}.

On the issues of economy, people and leaders were equally aware that no political party could come with specific measures to tackle the financial crises, such as irregularity in payment of salaries, financial overdraft, generating state revenues, etc. Yet non-inclusion of the same in the party manifesto could be suicidal.

(11) **Industrialization:** Congress assured to pay more attention to industries and a programme for development of small scale and village industries\textsuperscript{111}. The

\textsuperscript{107} http://www.e-pao.net/election02/JanataDal_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{108} http://www.e-pao.net/election02/Nationalist_congress_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{109} http://www.e-pao.net/election02/Manipur_State_Congress_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{110} http://www.e-pao.net/election02/Manipur_Peoples_Party_manifesto.asp. 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{111} The Manifesto of Indian National Congress Vidhan Sabha Elections, 2002, Manipur. Imphal, p. 9.
CPI said that industrialization should be done on a public sector\textsuperscript{112}. As the per capita income in the state is much below the National average and the state remains immensely backward, the parties were expected to come out with a dynamic approach by developing the agro-based industries. Most of the industries suggested by the political parties are common such as the setting up of Cement Factory, Paper Mill, Spinning Mill, Sugar Mill, Fruit Processing Plant, Bamboo-based Industry, Information Technology, including software parks etc. The state has been neglected so far in this sphere.

(12) **Agriculture:** According to Congress manifesto, self-sufficiency in food grains will be a top priority, followed by diversification into horticulture, including medicinal plants, sericulture and plantation crops like cashew nuts\textsuperscript{113}.

In Manipur, about 70\% of the population is dependent on agriculture. All the parties have equally emphasized on agricultural Reforms and its development. The vital needs for land reforms and positive measures for agricultural improvement have also been focused by all party manifestoes. The various remedial measures laid down have been irrigation, removal of uneconomic holdings, improved seeds, land reclamation, marketing facilities, use of fertilizers, etc. The Congress government passed in 1960 the Manipur Land Reforms Act, which provided land ceiling of 25 acres per family. However, until today, there seems to be no machinery to enforce it. Moreover, neither the government has yet formulated any sound agrarian policy nor the parties have ever demanded one.

\textsuperscript{112} http://www.e-pao.net/election_02_Communist_Party_of_India_manifesto.asp, 7-10-07.
\textsuperscript{113} The Manifesto of Indian National Congress. Vidhan Sabha Elections, 2002, Manipur. Imphal, p. 9.
Therefore, in the eight 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 depicted more or less the same socio-economic and political objectives. However, it can be said that all the political parties' manifestoes have provided the voters with several options and enlightened them with various local, regional, and other issues. Local issues like economic development and unavailability of basic infrastructure mainly dominated the 2002 election manifestoes. For example, the creation of a Sadar Hill district was the most crucial issue that affected the voters in Kuki dominated areas.

In our study of the various manifestoes and issues of various political parties, it is seen that none of the manifestoes 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. However, in real electoral politics the elections manifestoes of the political parties do not play an important role in the electioneering process in the hill areas of Manipur. It has more significance in the urban areas. Very few voters knew about the meaning, value and significance of the election manifestoes. One important thing to note here is that the manifestoes were not easily available to the people of the state. The manifestoes were usually absent
especially from the side of the regional parties while the national parties do not care to translate these to the local language.

**CAMPAIGNING**

Here, an attempt has also been made to study the efforts and activities of the candidates and political parties to reach the electorate while campaigning. The term election campaigning refers to the set of activities by political parties and candidates to seek electoral support in a bid to win political office. It includes such persuasive activities as speech making, passing out literature, broadcasting, and advertising, distributing posters, and holding rallies. In most countries, active campaigns are waged by well-organized political parties, which carry with them from one election to another a loyal body of supporters who almost invariably vote for the same party.\(^{114}\)

Each party launches a rigorous election campaign for influencing the voters in its favor. Such campaigns are designed to make a voter believe that the party or the candidate of the party contesting from his constituency can best serve his interest. Political campaigns are treated as occasions of immense importance by politicians, and never more so than today. In recent decades political actors of all sorts—parties and candidates, governments and other political institutions—have increasingly come to view political campaigning as an essential supplement to their engagement in the process of policy making. By investing ever more efforts and resources into political campaigns, they seek to

mobilize support among the mass public, to persuade citizens of their causes, and to inform the citizenry about public policies and political activities.\(^{115}\)

The effectiveness of campaigning varies from place to place, and person to person. In the valley region of Manipur, the election was influenced by the factors like party organization, personality and influence of the candidate, ideology of the parties whereas in the surrounding hills the voting behavior was affected by the personality of the candidate, money, and tribe preferences.\(^{116}\)

Ever since 1972, when Manipur got statehood, elections are being held and in each election, the people of the state are witnessed more or less the same nature and style of campaigning.

The campaign for the 2002 elections started late and in a dull atmosphere. Many organizations placed restrictions on setting up camps, use of intoxicants, distribution of money, opening of shades, financial assistance for pilgrimage, picnics, of road repairing near the elections, meeting after 7 p.m. etc, etc. which were usual practices in the past. In substance the idea behind was that election should be less expensive. The second was the acts of violence seen at many places. There were also accusations that candidates were forced to withdraw their nominations, e.g. the INC candidates for Chandel and Tengnoupal constituencies.

Ever since 1972, when Manipur got statehood, elections were being held and in each election, the people of the state witnessed more or less the same


nature and style of campaigning. However, in the recent election there were instances of engaging professional artists and entertainers to campaign for a particular candidate or a party. Manipur has a large number of youth organizations and clubs all over the area and financing such clubs is one way of getting enthusiastic and youthful support. In the sampled constituencies, the following campaign devices were adopted on a large scale.

Wall-writing/Party flags/Posters

The names of the contesting candidates, their party symbols, party’s name, their catchphrases etc. were printed on the walls of buildings and shops in their constituencies. Flags and posters of contending parties were put up at different public places. All these have not only the visual impact but also shows that a household if raised a particular party’s flag in the courtyard of the house with consent is regarded as the staunch supporter of that party. This tactic benefited the candidates in their popularity drive and thus able to woo the floating or indecisive voters. The candidates selected vintage points for placing the writings to attract the maximum attention of the electorate like walls along the main roads, bus stops, etc. The congress candidates were ahead of other candidates in the poster campaign. Posters depicting Mrs. Gandhi and O. Ibobi Singh and the election symbol of the congress party were widely pasted in different parts of the area.

---

118 Interview with respondents.
119 Interview with respondents.
Election Meetings

Public meetings was a major means of campaigning in during the elections. All other techniques of propaganda have also their place in the overall strategy of elections. However, for building a public image of the candidate nothing could be compared with well organized and well attended public meetings. However, the public meetings and the speeches therein did not greatly influence the average voters directly.\textsuperscript{120} However, one fact is that a fair section of the electorate gauged the chances of the respective candidates based on the attendance at their meetings and voted accordingly hoping to be on the winning side.\textsuperscript{121} Therefore, all the major political parties organized meetings and at the same time mobilize the public to attend in large numbers.

During 2002 elections, one could find jeeps fitted with loud speakers and decorated with party flags and posters in the roads with someone enumerating the qualities of the candidates and thus asking the public to vote. Modern science has found to change the form of election campaign in the west where election broadcasts and television programmes have replaced the public meeting as the chief instrument of an election campaign.\textsuperscript{122} In Manipur, however, public meeting continues to be important in an election campaign.\textsuperscript{123} However, in the face of threats from insurgent groups, no party held big

\textsuperscript{120} Interview with respondents
\textsuperscript{121} Interview with respondents
\textsuperscript{122} Bangendu Ganguly & Mira Ganguly, \textit{Voting Behaviour in Developing Society}, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, p 20
\textsuperscript{123} R P Singh, \textit{Op cit}, p 124
campaign rallies. Instead, they have organized public meetings at the local level.

**Door-to door Canvassing**

Candidate carried door-to-door campaign with their supporters in order to have an informal face-to-face interaction with their electorates. This contact often proves more effective than any other method. This process and technique of campaigning have a great influence in the voting behavior since it involves direct contacts between the candidates and the electorates\(^{124}\).

In the sampled constituencies, candidates usually stopped in front of houses and shops and talked to the people around while the supporters would distribute leaflets directly to the voters with an appeal to vote. Appeals were made in the name of party, tribe, people and the personality and performance of the candidate\(^{125}\). Several times, party workers and youth clubs go on such campaign. They would take out slogan shouting procession also. Such campaigns were held in the evening in order to contact as many voters as possible. The voting behavior was influenced by this personal contact\(^{126}\). Even educated voters have been found to disclose in confidence that only so and so candidates approached them personally and so he or she voted for him in the absence of an alternative appeal.

\(^{124}\) ibid.
\(^{125}\) Interview with respondents.
\(^{126}\) Interview with respondents.
Community Feast

Out of the many methods of campaigning in the sampled constituencies, group feasting is one of them. Workers and supporters of a party try to contact the electorate over a lunch or a dinner and make an effort to touch the heart of the people present by presenting a positive image of their candidate. Financially unsound candidate could not afford this costly affair but of late to the candidates’ advantage one interesting trend started unfolding, i.e. more or less the same persons are found in different feastings organized by different political party’s candidate. Thus, it makes things more complicated for the candidates for they could not confidently count on anyone as his or her true supporters. One good reason behind this trend could be that the electorate have lost faith in their political masters. Thus, they justified enjoying the candidates money and power at the time of elections. Some of the supporters of the contesting candidates even offered intoxicating drinks to the supporters.

Press and Media

The All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan Kendra (DDK) most of the time, did not cover the events in the hill areas due to weak network of transport and law and order situation. It was confined to the Imphal areas only. Thus, it does not have a profound impact on the majority of the people living in rural and hill areas.

127 Interview with respondents.
128 Interview with the chief of Gangpijang.
Impact of Money

Voter bribing is an open secret in the sampled constituencies. Candidates, affluent ones or belonging to an affluent party, are alleged to have offered money to the voters. In an interview with some of the respondents it was found that, they received money or intoxicating drinks from the candidates in return of their promise to vote for them.

Boiling Tea

This mode of campaigning is a common feature in Manipur hills. Election campaign by way of boiling tea was carried out mainly at night. The chief summons the villagers for the meeting. One among the campaigners will then address the chief and the villagers in very congenial social settings to influence them positively. In his speech, he will focus on the qualities and political carriers of the candidate^{129}. The political parties contesting in the sample constituencies employed more or less the same method of campaigning.

After studying the political parties in Manipur and their manifestoes, programmes and the issues that they had raised, the next chapter will study the role of chiefs, church and youth in mobilizing people during elections.

^{129} Interview with respondents.