Chapter IV

MANIPUR POLITICS UNDER UNION TERRITORY

The people of Manipur had once experienced the rule of responsible government under the Maharaja of Manipur with a Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers. The people of Manipur also had witnessed adult franchise for the first time in the state in 1948. However, with the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union Manipur became directly administered by the Governor of Assam through the Commissioner appointed by him.¹ It will not be an exaggeration to say that it was the fulfillment of aspiration only on the part of some political elite of Manipur. But the majority of the people remained discontented with the new political changes. So people of Manipur expressed discontentment by raising various issues.

Formation of the States Reorganization Commission created apprehension in the political circles regarding the fate of Manipur. Ultimately, the Seventh Amendment Act, 1956, amended the First Schedule of the Indian

Constitution which came into force on 1 November 1956. Under this Amendment there are now only two categories comprising the Indian Union, namely state and Union Territory.²

As a result of the aforesaid Amendment Act Manipur was listed as one of the Union territories. The Amendment Act had abolished the part 'C' status of the state and Territories in part 'D' of the Indian constitution and thereby replaced them with the Union Territories. The Union Territories were to be governed by the Union President through the administrator to be appointed by him. In the formation of the Union Territories the Union Government was mostly guided by the consideration of defence and security requirement of those sensitive border area.

**Territorial Council of Manipur**

The Territorial Council of Manipur under Territorial Council Act 1956 came into being on 15 August 1957. The first meeting of the Council was held on the 16 August 1957. The Judicial Commissioner administered oath to the members of the Territorial Council of Manipur. The Chief Commissioner addressed the members in the first meeting of the Council.³

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An Advisory Committee for Manipur was formed in November 1956. Home Minister of the Union was the Chairman of the Committee. The Committee consisted of M.Ps representing Manipur. According to the term of the Constitution the Committee was to be consulted on the following points:

1. General question of policy relating to the administration of the Territory.

2. All Legislative proposal concerning the territory in regard to matters in the state lists including proposal to extend any stat to the territory.

3. Such matter relating to the annual financial statement of the Union is so far as it concerns the Territory and such other financial questions as may be specified in rules prescribed by the President.

4. Any other matter on which it may be considered necessary or desirable by the Minister of Home Affairs that the advisory committee should be consulted.

The Council had to meet at least once in every two months. However, the Chairman or the Vice Chairman might convened a meeting whenever he thought fit. One fifth of the Territorial Council members may also be asked

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
the Chairman for convening a meeting of the Council. The administrator of
the Union Territory may attend and address any of the Council meeting.

The Territorial Council had the power over the maintenance and
management of movable and immovable property and institutions transferred
to the Council. The Council had powers over the construction, repairing and
maintenance of roads, bridges, channels, building, water tank, etc.
Preservation and planting of trees, establishment and maintenance of
institutions of Primary and secondary schools, hospitals, dispensaries, market,
rest houses, fair price shops, embankment and control of water for agricultural
purposes, etc. were entrusted to the Territorial Council. It also control led,
public health and sanitations, Panchayats, and other local works entrusted to it
by the central administration.\textsuperscript{5}

The Territorial Council also had the power over any other matters as
transferred to it by the government such as registration of birth, marriage and
death, levying of tax, on professions, school fees, land revenue tax and other
entertainment tax, etc. were also in the hands of the Territorial Council.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5} Nehru and Manipur, Published by State Level Committee, the 40\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of India's Independence and Birth Centenary of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Imphal, 1989, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{6} N. Ibobi Singh, Elements of Public Administration in India, Imphal, Rajshree Book Stall, 1974, p. 263.
The Territorial Council also had the power to supervised and give directions over the use of the grant-in-aid from the Central Government. The Central Government had the power to make rules for the conduct of business of the Council, for the appointment of committees and prescription of budget estimate, language of conduct of business, transfer of property, etc. But the Council could discussed over the budget prepared by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who was appointed by the Central Government. The Chief Executive Officer of the Territorial Council had the sole responsibilities over the preparation of state budget advised by the Central Government.

The Territorial Council appointed standing as well as Adhoc Committee for the effective functioning of its duties.

The Central Government transferred very little power to the Council over the administration of the state. Central Government exercised real power over the administration of the state through the administrator. The parliament acted as the real legislative body of the Territorial Council.

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7 N. Ibobi Singh. n. 6, p. 263.
8 Ibid.
9 Nehru and Manipur, n. 5, p. 65.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
The Second General Elections in India were held in 1957. The Manipur Territorial Council election of the 30 members was held in January 1957. Parliamentary Elections to elect two members of the Lok Sabha were also held simultaneously.


An important features of the Second General Elections in 1957 was the emergenced of strong regional political parties.\(^\text{14}\) The Territorial Council


\(^{13}\) Ibid.

elections of Manipur in 1957 were contested by four political parties including two regional parties. A large numbers of Independent candidates contested. But no party could secure absolute majority in the election. The Congress Party contested all 30 seats and secured 12 seats as the single largest majority. Socialist contested 23 seats and secured 7 seats. 17 Communist candidates contested and four of them were elected. Praja socialist secured no seat though 21 candidates contested. Out of 57 independent candidates seven candidates were elected.\textsuperscript{15}

The Lok Sabha Constituencies remained unchanged in 1957 elections. There were elections to elect two members of Lok Sabha to represent the Inner and Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituencies. The contesting four parties were Congress, Socialist, Commumnist and Praja Socialist along with 5 Independent candidates. The Socialist captured the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat while the Congress captured the seat of Outer Manipur Constituency.\textsuperscript{16}

The people of Manipur could not fulfill the aspiration with the then existing Territorial Council. They considered it a step towards the formation of responsible government. People remained discontent and started agitation to restore full responsible government in Manipur. A mass satyagraha

\textsuperscript{15} R.P. Singh, n. 12, pp. 26-28.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 27.
movement under the Assembly Demand Co-ordinating Committee was launched. The valley was convulsed by the agitation demanding Legislative Assembly. It was sponsored by the local Communist and Socialist party. The mass Satyagraha movement was lasted for about two months beginning from the second week of April 1960. The agitators preventing government servants from attending their offices, shouting slogans and stopping all the vehicles, traffic, etc., and they forcibly closed down all markets.\textsuperscript{17}

The agitation for the establishment of Legislative Assembly in Manipur entered a new phase since April 20. There has been almost complete suspension of all normal transaction at Imphal. The territorial government of Manipur warned the agitators against the evil consequences of "Lawlessness and their unconstitutional illegal activities".\textsuperscript{18}

Still the agitators strengthened the movement. Several batches of female agitators were also started joining the movement. woman agitators forcibly entered the C.M. Bangalow compound and asked him to take up necessary prompt action for the restoration of ful responsible government in Manipur. Numbers of women agitators paraded the street in procession

\textsuperscript{17} Annual Administration Report of Manipur, Imphal, 1960-1961 p. 7.

\textsuperscript{18} R.K. Sanahal, n. 1, p. 177.
shouting slogans demanding establishment of legislative assembly in Manipur.\textsuperscript{19}

On the 25 April 1960 the police fired ten round when the violent crowd of several thousand satyagraha surged forward and collected at Moirangthem to violate the Prohibitory order under section 144 Cr. PC. Hundreds of agitators were arrested and taken into custody. Many of them also injured in firing, bursting of tear gas shells and lathi charges. More than a hundred persons including women were injured. 14 women and 15 men were admitted to hospital. On 27\textsuperscript{th} April thousands of students marched in procession to the C.M. house against the prohibitory order. Several students were injured as a result of police lathi-charges.\textsuperscript{20}

Law and order situation in Manipur had gone from bad to worse. The whole valley was in a tense. As in order to keep the situation under control, the Fourth Assam Rifles, Eastern Frontier Rifles, and the Seventh Bn. of Bihar Constabulary were posted indifferent strategic points. A full contingent of West Bengal Armed Police also rushed to Imphal to render assistance to local police.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{20} R.K. Snaahal, n. 1, p. 177.

The imposition of curfew and the promulgation of prohibitory order under section 144 of the Cr. PC. in Manipur valley subsided the movement for time being. Many leaders went underground. But the leftists prepared for a showdown in Manipur in the form of march and the mass defiance of the prohibitory orders under section 144 Cr. PC. Volunteers were recruited by the left parties in the villages.22

The third general elections came in 1962. Manipur also went to polls for its second Territorial Council election simultaneously with the two Lok Sabha seats. Parties contested in the elections were the Socialist, the congress, the Communist, the Praja Socialist and Independent.

In the Territorial Council Elections of Manipur in 1962 the Congress party won 15 seats, Socialist party 5 seats and 10 seats went to the independents. The Congress received the highest average votes captured 50 percent of the territorial Council seats.23 The leader of the Manipur State Congress Shri. M. Koireng Singh who commanded the largest number of Congress M.L.As formed the government and ruled Manipur upto the First Territorial Legislative Assembly Election in 1967.24

For the Lok Sabha seats Salam Tombi Singh, the Congress candidate defeated the Socialist, Communist, Praja Socialist and two Independent candidates for the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat. In the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency the Socialist candidate Shri Rishang Keishing captured the seat.25

The Indian Parliament enacted the Government of the Union Territories Act in 1963. The Act came into force on 1 July 1963 in Manipur, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh. It was enacted by "virtues of Article 239A" of the Constitution which was inserted by the Constitution (Fourteen Amendment) Act, 1962. The objective of the amendment was to create Legislature and the Council of Ministers in the Union Territory of Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, Goa, Damand and Diu and Pondicherry on the pattern of part 'C' states Act 1951. The Act "repealed the Territorial Council Act, 1956 and made elaborate provisions relating to Legislature and Executive in a Union Territory governed by the Act." The Legislature of the Union Territory under the Act was unicameral or one chamber known as Legislative Assembly whose members were to be elected by direct election. The Central Government was to nominate not more than 3 members in addition to the 30 members elected by the people directly.26

25 R.P. Singh, n. 12, p. 31.

26 Rajkumar Manisana Singh, n. 2, pp. 35-36.
The President of India continued to administer through administrator. The chief minister would be appointed by the President. On the advise of Chief Minister the President appointed other ministers.

The Union Territories Act of 1963 made special provisions for the Hill areas of Manipur, constituting a Standing Committee of all the members of the Assembly representing the hill areas. It got jurisdiction over matters relating to the management of land and forest, irrigation, shifting cultivation, village and town committees, appointed or succession of Chiefs and headman and special system. Every bill relating to the hill areas that was moved in the Legislative Assembly was subjected to the scrutiny and approval of the Committee.\(^\text{27}\)

Under the Union Territories Act 1963 the state Government would appoint a committee to study the working of Panchayat. The committee recommended the two-tier system of Panchayats. To incorporate their recommendation, an amendment bill, i.e., Manipur Panchayat Raj Bill, 1963, providing for establishing of two-tier system of Panchayat Raj at the village level and block level was introduced in Manipur.\(^\text{28}\)


The first Territorial Assembly Elections in Manipur was held on 19th February 1967 in the valley and on 20th February 1967 in the hills. Parliamentary Elections to elect two Lok Sabha were also held on the same day.

As the Assembly Elections were held for the first time the people of the state both in the valley and in the hills were very enthusiastic. The political parties were keen on forming the government of their own. Political parties concentrated more on the Assembly Elections rather than on the Lok Sabha Elections, three political parties out of five political parties contested in the Lok Sabha elections.29

While the 29 Constituencies were very keenly contested, one of the constituencies, Mao-West, did not go to polls as the Congress nominee Sibo Lorho returned unopposed.30 The party-wise position were out of 30 seats, Congress won 16 seats, Samyukta Socialist Party secured 4 seats, Communist Party of India won only one seat and 9 seats went to the Independent candidates. The Congress had a comfortable majority of 25 members as the seven of the 9 Independent went to the Congress and two were nominated by the Central Government. Leader of the Congress legislature party, Shri. M. Koireng Singh was sworn in as Chief Minister on 20. Soon after the

29 R.P. Singh, n. 12, p. 36.
30 Ibid., p. 38.
installation of the Koireng Ministry, the administrative atmosphere of Manipur went into tense. Struggle for power within the Congress Legislature party began. In order to make his position firm the Chief Minister had persuaded many M.L.As with promise for ministrieship, contact and certain benefits but he could not win them. The law and order situation in the hill areas was also considerably deteriorated. Manipur was in a state of chaos finding no alternative Koireng Singh resigned on 4 October 1967.31

The United Legislature Front (ULF) headed by Shri L. Thambou Singh was sworn in on 13 October 1967. On 14th October 1967 one day after the ULF ministry was sworn Shri Koireng Singh could win over Shri Demjalam Kipgen. So Shri Koireng Singh sent a motion of no confidence motion against the ULF ministry. When the Legislative Assembly met on 16 October 1967 Shri. S. Tombi Singh, Speaker of the Assembly adjourned the House till 23 October 1967 neither of the parties could win majority.

By an order of the President of India on 25 October 1967, the Manipur Legislative Assembly was suspended and the administration was taken over by the President with effect from 25 October 1967.32


Both sides tried their level best to consolidate their position. Koireng Singh who had a support of 22 members claimed and he was sworn in on the 19 February 1968. But the Manipur Legislative Assembly headed by Shri M. Koireng Singh was further dissolved and the administration of Manipur was taken over by the President on 16 October 1969.33

Various local political parties emerged between 1968 and 1972. Manipur People Party (MPP), Manipur National Party (MNP), the United Naga Integrated Committee (UNIC), the Manipur National Organisation (MNO) were the important local political parties which emerged during the period.

Shri Y. Yaima Singh a prominent member of the Congress party who got elected in all the general elections since 1957 was denied the party ticket in the Fourth General Assembly Elections of 1967. However, he contested the elections as an Independent candidate and won the same. He was associated with Shri S. Tombi Singh and Shri Kh. Chaoba who were also expelled from the Congress party. These three M.L.As initiated a move to form a local political party in Manipur under the name and style of the Manipur Peoples

"Ibid., p. 28."
Party. The first convention was held on 26 December 1968.\textsuperscript{34} This party plays an important role in Manipur till date.

The Manipur National Party (MNP) was formed in 1968 with Shri Tombi Singh as its leader. The Party was merged with MPP in 1974.

The United Naga Integration Committee (UNIC) was formed in the later part of 1971 with Rishang Keishing, a prominent Congress leader as its leader. The party survived for one year and ultimately merged with the Congress in 1972.\textsuperscript{35}

The Manipur National Organisation (MNO) was formed in the eve of 1972 Assembly Elections. The Party was formed by members of Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) which got split into two.\textsuperscript{36} The party was merged with the MPP in 1977.

The achievement of Union Territory could not fulfil the aspiration of the people of Manipur. With the beginning of 1970 the agitation for demanding statehood status for Manipur assumed full vigour. Many members of the Rajya Sabha demanded in the Rajya Sabha on 30 March, 1970 that

\textsuperscript{34} Th. Gokul Singh, n. 33, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 35.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 30.
Manipur should be given statehood. During the discussion of the Manipur budget for 1970-71 all the speakers were unanimously supported the demand.

Shri. G. Barbora, leader of the Samyukta Socialist Party (SPP) warned the Government that there might be a violent revolution in Manipur if its demand was not considered immediately. More than 20 members of the parliament belonging to different political parties had in a joint letter addressed to Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi demanded immediate steps to be taken to fulfil the political aspiration by granting statehood.\(^\text{37}\)

A delegation consisting of leaders of different political parties was sent to New Delhi in 1970 to meet leaders of opposition groups in parliament. The delegation also met the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the President of India. Joint Memorandum of the Tribal leaders was also submitted to the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi on 7 May 1970 demanding immediate granting of statehood to Manipur.\(^\text{38}\)

All Political Parties Statehood Demand Committee called Manipur bandh on 3 August 1970 immediately after the announcement of statehood to Himachal Pradesh. The whole valley was totally paralysed. Boycott and Civil


\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 186.
disobedience movements were launched. The Indian Independence Day was 
boycotted.

The civil disobedience movement was started from 17 August 1970 and 
slogans like "We demand Statehood", "Co-ordinating Committee Zindabad",
etc, were shouted. More than 2000 volunteers joined the civil disobedience 
movement of the co-ordinating body.\textsuperscript{39}

The Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi announced on 3 September 
1970 that the Centre had agreed to grand statehood to Manipur and Tripura. 
On hearing the announcement made by the Central Government the people of 
Manipur were rejoiced. Shri. Kulabidhu of Praja Socialist Party said that it 
was the triumph of both hills and plain people of Manipur.\textsuperscript{40} But the Bill for 
granting statehood could not be introduced because of the dissolution of the 
Lok Sabha by the President on 28 December 1970. The dissolution of the Lok 
Sabha was responsible for the split of the Congress into two groups.

In 1971 the country went to the Mid-term poll to elect Fifth Lok Sabha. 
Manipur also went to polls to elect two members of the parliament. The 
political parties contested in the election were Congress, Congress (O), 
Communist Party of India, Samyukta Socialist Party, Manipur Peoples Party

\textsuperscript{39} Press note issued by the Co-ordinating Committee body on 18 August 1970.

appeared on the election scene for the first time fielded its candidate for the Inner Manipur Parliamentary constituency. There were four Independent candidates contested two for each seat.\textsuperscript{41}

The Congress Party captured both the Outer and Inner Parliamentary Constituencies in Manipur in the Mid-term poll. N. Tombi Singh was elected for the Inner Manipur Parliamentary seat defeating his nearest rival M. Meghachandra, the sitting C.P.I. member of the Parliament. Paokai Haokip the sitting congress M.P. captured the outer Manipur seat.\textsuperscript{42}

Mrs. Gandhi returned to power after the 1971 elections. The Government of India took up its early stand by fulfilling its commitment. The North-East Re-organisation Act was passed by the Parliament in 1972. It included necessary arrangement for inauguration of Statehood for Manipur on 21 January 1972.

\textsuperscript{41} R.P. Singh, n. 12, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 45.