CHAPTER I

ELECTORAL POLITICS AND BACKGROUND OF ELECTIONS IN MANIPUR

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 are the primary mechanism of citizen mobilization in most democracies. The public regular choice of political leaders through elections is one of the bases of representative democracy, and the rationality of the public choices is a measure of the meaningfulness of the democratic 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.

Election is one of the important components of democracy. Its instrumental character in democratic theory and practice ought to be recognized. Put simply, the right to vote is essentially an individual right. In an elections, it is the individual who is supposed to decide whom to vote and why without any compulsion whatsoever to make the reasons for a particular choice. The translation of the individual into an aggregate outcome, however, remains problematic. The study of politics, in general, and elections, in particular, tries to reveal the process and meaning of this translation. This is where the community, association, group, ideology, resources, language, symbols, communication, mobilization and local issues assumes significance as

---

2 Ibid.
mediating factors which integrate the individual choice into a collective expression. Elections open up channels between the polity and the society, the elites and the masses, the individual and his government. They are the major agencies of political socialization and political participation.

Many election studies have been undertaken in the western countries, which seek to evaluate the working of their democratic systems. Political behavior eventually gained focus in many of these studies. The coming of behavioralism into the social sciences from the fifties has brought the transformation in the discipline of political science too. These transformations have been incorporated into election studies, which include study of the nature of society, role of groups, classes, corruption, the reaction of various classes, etc. Such a study in turn has to be undertaken in the background of an analysis of the nature of the state, if it has to yield meaningful analysis of the working of democracy in the nation. Election studies attempt to understand and explain the social reality.

The election studies are essentially a post-second world war development in Political Science and were born out of ideological factors. The spread of Fascism in Europe through the electoral process severely challenged the assumptions of the inherent merits of democracy and elections and questioned the very faith in what the West viewed to be, the rationality of human behavior. Democratic forms and elections, ironically became the very vehicles on which authoritarian rode to power, and held its influence. Mass voting by the people

---

usually associated with the concept of participatory democracy led to the emergence of Fascism and demagogy rule rather than to a healthy democracy. Why and how such parties and leaders manipulated the electoral process and the voters, who were otherwise politically ignorant and inactive, became interesting poser before the political scientists.\textsuperscript{5} Elections were identified with democracy and the voting pattern with the strength and viability of western forms of democracy. Motivated by these ideologies curiosities to test the viability of democratic system in the newly independent countries, many western scholars began to apply to the later, the highly sophisticated techniques, which they developed in the west. The dynamics of human behavior and its fallout in their ‘Political’ behavior came to be the focus of many a study on the political system. The elections manifesting this periodic political behavior acquired a deterministic rule, in judging the strength and weakness of the political system and its future trends. The viability of the electoral reforms with their simple empirical data not merely made election studies more and more feasible and popular, but even helped to increasingly transform the orientation of political science towards mathematical statistics and computer technology.\textsuperscript{6}

The first studies of voting behaviour were made by historians and political scientists seeking to explain past elections. Their basic data were election results, and information about the geographical units for which election data existed. The study of voting behaviour constitutes an important area of political science in which theory can be systematically and qualitatively measured and


\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 3-4.
tested. The voters’ intention to vote is a dynamic changing and even fluid mental situation, which is subject to influence and manipulation by factors, which can be internal as well as external. The complex role of elections in the political system is underlined by an examination of the voting behaviour of electorates.7 Electoral behaviour is the behaviour, which indicates the voter’s choices, preferences, alternatives, agreements, concerns, ideologies and programmes among others in respect of the various questions of issues on which the various elections are fought. Thus, the voting behaviour apart from being an individual choice and aptitude indicates the dynamic role that one plays in the achievement of a collective end. It implies the essential assertion of his rights and commitments to the society and the nation. It is concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public elections and the reasons why they vote as they do.8

Voting behaviour of the people is not uniform. It differs from place to place, culture to culture and time to time. It is very difficult to generalize about the way in which people vote in the elections. Political behaviour like all other human behaviour takes place in a certain context of social milieu, political structure, economic development, historical background, and cultural heritage of a society. In any effort to build a theory, cognizance of these factors will have to be taken. This does not mean that the factors like ideologies, belief-system of a community or emotional issues are to be ignored. On the other hand, one could argue that all these factors are interrelated, continuously acting and reaching.

9 Ibid.
In this process of action and reaction, the political behaviour takes place to choose a new set of political elite to rule the masses for a specific period\(^10\).

Since elections in developing countries occur mainly within the context of agrarian and plural societies, electoral behaviour and thus electoral outcomes are shaped by different concerns than in the industrial democracies. More citizens in developing countries define their political interests based on where they live rather than in terms of what they do or their socio-economic status or class. Their interests are shaped mainly by their effective ties to their local community and the specific needs of these communities. Local issues are usually far more salient in the minds of most citizens than national issues. Ideological issues, especially when framed in terms of conventional left-right policy alternatives, are rarely the focus of political discourse.\(^11\)

Another defining feature of elections in the context of agrarian and plural societies is that political mobilization invariably occurs via patron-client organizations that in turn give rise to neo-patrimonial patterns of political authority\(^12\). Because most citizens are rural dwellers who have limited access to print media or to broadcasting directed to their local communities, party agents working at the grass roots do the mobilization of rural electorates largely on a face- to- face and household-to-household basis\(^13\).

In a traditional society like India experiencing rapid socio-economic and political change, social structure assumes a new significance. The release of the

\(^{10}\) Ibid


\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
individual from the traditional bonds of family, kinship, caste and neighbourhood is neither complete nor universal. If this sociological background could be forgotten, there is really no need of an independent theory of Indian politics or for that matter Indian political behaviour. From the studies conducted in the country it can be said that voting behaviour is not similar to that in western countries\textsuperscript{14}.

The absence of a significant class-structure, apart from the caste-hierarchy, in the Indian society differentiated it from the western society. The class-consciousness, being absent or weak, does not make any noticeable impact on voting patterns. In constructing any theory of voting behaviour in India, class may not serve as an important variable. Week party strengthens itself by exploiting the caste feeling whenever it is convenient to do so. It gives rise to the mixed character of democratic politics being carried on with the help of traditional techniques and channels\textsuperscript{15}.

Indian community is undergoing rapid social change. The social change affects the factors, which influence voting. The social change is neither spread nor does it has the same intensity for the different sections of the community. In addition, the effort to build a theory suffers from the absence of an average Indian voter. Any valid generalization has to be based on the concept of an average unit, which shares the general properties of the population. In India


with its heterogeneity arising out of languages, castes, region and customs, any effort to arrive at the average voter does not succeed\textsuperscript{16}.

In fine, it could be said that there would be not one but many theories of Indian voting behaviour, depending on the region, community or the specific interests of the researcher. It is out of such efforts at theory building that a final product may emerge which may satisfy the methodological demands and adequately reflect the reality of Indian political behaviour\textsuperscript{17}.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Studies on Indian elections acquired importance in the nineteen fifties. However, these studies were influenced by the work done in the field in the United States of America\textsuperscript{18}. 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.

Many studies of Indian elections are descriptive. They tend to be based on case studies or surveys of individual voters looking into various aspects. Such aspects include among others the selection of candidates, the electoral campaign process, actual voting behaviour of individual voters like political

\textsuperscript{16} *Ibid*

\textsuperscript{17} V. M. Sirsikar, *Sovereigns without Crowns*, Popular Prakanshan, Bombay, 1973, pp 16-17

perceptions and party preferences, and socio-economic status. These studies are very useful for understanding the electoral processes of parties and the voting behaviours of individual voters such as who votes for whom, for which party, and how. Studies that were based on detailed surveys of individuals using large-scale sampling and conducted continuously for several elections did not emerge until the nineteen sixties.

Studies based on surveys of individual voters or case studies of election politics include Sirsikar\textsuperscript{19} studied the Poona Lok Sabha constituency in the 1967 election using a questionnaire survey of 913 respondents. His analysis showed the following points: (1) the majority exhibited faith in the efficacy of elections and parties, but the higher the educational level of voters, the less faith they had in democracy. This may be partly related to the fact that there may be higher caste people, like Brahmans, in the category of the highly educated. (2) The higher the educational level of voters, the more capable they seemed to be in discriminating between political parties, especially the Congress party. (3) Minority, linguistic or religious voters, tended to support the Congress. (4) 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. (5) Influence of candidate, party loyalty, and caste loyalties influence voting. (6) Occupation, income, and age of voters, by and large, do not influence voting behaviour. Kini\textsuperscript{20} studied the election in Nagpur during the 4th General Elections in 1967 using panel data collected from interviews of 281 respondents. He found various important psychological processes through analysis of the detailed

\textsuperscript{20} N G S Kini, \textit{The City Voter in India - A Study of 1967 General Elections in Nagpur}, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1974
questionnaire. Issues, whether domestic and foreign, were not important for those who voted for Congress. Identification with leadership was significantly related to voting choice. People who were exposed to higher level of party campaign tended to change their original vote intention. Nevertheless, there was remarkable stability in original voting intention. Socio-economic status such as gender, caste, religion, education, and income, were important in explaining political awareness, exposure to political propaganda, political involvement, caste identification, sense of personal effectiveness in politics, and exposure to modernization. Those who were ranked high in political awareness, exposure to campaign propaganda, political involvement, caste identification, sense of personal effectiveness in politics, and exposure to modernization, were more likely to vote for non-Congress parties. In addition, socio-economic status of voters was significantly related to choice of parties.

Eldersveld and Ahmed's study was based on the nation-wide sample survey of the 1967 and 1971 general elections. They first compared data in India with data in more developed countries. According to their analysis, the Indian voters were as perceptive and interested in political issues and parties in elections as were voters in developed countries. They also found: (1) Political cultures between rural and urban areas were basically continuous, but there were discernable differences between States. (2) Variables of socio-economic status, including education and castes, were important variables for the formation of political perception such as a sense of political efficacy. (3) Those who were more exposed to the campaign, more educated, and who voted regularly, were

---

more interested in politics and more likely to support multi-party democracy with a clearer sense of political efficacy (4) As in the USA, family was influential in the formation of party identification (5) Some degree of congruence was found between voters' party-preference on the one hand, and voters' concern for political issues on the other, especially among supporters of the Communist Party and Jangh Sangh (6) The formation of perceptions toward party was susceptible to voters' party identification, socio-economic status, exposure to political communication, and psychological orientations toward society (7) Those that were highly educated or in high castes were less likely to be politically involved and participatory

Aloo Dastur\textsuperscript{22} in her study of Parliamentary elections of 1967 in Bombay (based on interviews of 603 respondents in three constituencies) found that the Bombay voters had gained political consciousness and maturity through the passage of years A percentage of women voters, the illiterate, the backward, and the scheduled castes, even in rural areas, had become conscious of their power to vote A majority of women voted independently of men The campaign was subdued, and voters were not easily impressed by propaganda D N Pathak's\textsuperscript{23} study of Gujarat voters (based on 698 respondents in three constituencies) had revealed that male, young, highly educated and higher caste voters made their voting decision earlier, while females, old, less educated and lower castes voters delayed their voting decisions

\textsuperscript{22} Aloo Dastur, \textit{The Bombay Voter 1967} in Aloo Daatur (ed.), \textit{Studies in the fourth General Elections} Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1972

The *People’s Verdict* by G.G. Mirchandani\(^{24}\) concludes that, the Indian voters, despite their educational, economic, and social constraints posses a measure of political sophistication, which is expected only in an advanced democratic society. C.P Bhambhri, *The Urban Voter: Municipal Elections in Rajasthan*\(^{25}\) shows that a very large percentage of the sample electorate showed preference for religious, caste and other primordial considerations. The result shows that the process of urbanization would not affect the population much, particularly in breaking the old barriers and loyalties to religion and caste. It also shows that the general population in the town area does not attach much importance to activities other than casting votes. *The Uncertain Verdict* by Rameshray Roy\(^{26}\), focuses on the electorate located in different milieus and, through an exploration of their attributes, examines the implications of differential configurations of these attributes for the sustenance and preservation of democratic institutions in the states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. It also provides some materials that may help in understanding the complex process of interaction between socio-economic conditions, individual attributes, and democratic development. Sachchinanda’s *The Tribal Voter in Bihar*\(^{27}\), dealt with voting behavior with special focus on the tribal people in Bihar. It also studied the level of awareness of the tribal voters about the candidates, their party affiliation, and election symbols. It also 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.

---


These studies, as a whole, are valuable in revealing various factors influencing voting behaviour on the electorate. They include socio-economic status like education, caste, occupation, and class, value systems, and other important characteristics of voters, as well as issues in the elections, ideological positions and strategies of mobilization on the part of parties. The scope and time-span for most of these studies are primarily limited to a few States or areas and cover a relatively short period. What is needed in order to understand the basic and long-term undercurrent in Indian politics is a database covering major parts of India over long periods. In this respect, the series of surveys by the Centre for Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS) are important in terms of coverage, consistency, and continuity.

A large-scale sample survey of electorate by the CSDS was started in the general election in 1967. Since then, CSDS has been conducting election surveys every major election, not only Lok Sabha, but also State Assembly elections. It has also published insightful articles and reports based on the surveys. The series of surveys and analyses by the CSDS has revealed various important facts through which the direction of the transformation of people's political perceptions can be understood. The series of surveys by the CSDS are valuable because of the continuity and consistency of methods and contents applied in the surveys. For example, the series shows that one of the major changes resulting in long-term erosion of the support base of the Congress party is the shift of allegiance of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from Congress to other parties, including the BJP. It also shows that although the situation is different depending upon time and place, castes and religions of voters are probably the most important determinants of party support.
Economic status is less important compared to these ethnic attributes. Other social attributes such as level of education are not significant in explaining voter party preferences.

India is a highly heterogeneous and fragmented sub-continental society. It is, therefore, impossible to ignore the problems of social cleavage based on language, caste, religion, class, and other such variables. It is usually very difficult to analyse these problems for ecological studies based on aggregate data. It is probably better to rely on the precise information that individual-based survey or case studies can provide. For example, such information includes data on who votes for which party. Individual-based or case study-based research can effectively check possible ecological fallacies in aggregate data based studies. Individual-based or case study-based research, as a whole, constitutes a rich depository of information on electoral behaviour. It would be very useful to utilise information to make up for the shortcomings of studies based on aggregate data and to check the possibility of ecological fallacy.

Studies based on statistical analysis of aggregate election data, especially those of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, began to emerge after the 1970's. Use of aggregate election data cannot be avoided if macro and long-term patterns of voting behaviour are to be understood. Fortunately, because of the efforts of the Election Commission, such aggregate data are almost complete in India. The web site of the Election Commission provides all the necessary data concerning both levels of elections28. Constitution-wise voter-turnout, details of votes polled by each party, and other details of the Lok

Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections are available for analysis. Major studies include those of Elkins\textsuperscript{29} research that was carried out on State Legislative Assembly election data and it was early pioneering ecological analysis in India. His study was based on data of four southern States from 1952 to 1967. It showed the importance of the State political context, literacy rate, the development of regional communication in explaining turnout, and the number of candidates. Dasgupta and Morris-Jones\textsuperscript{30} tried to discover a socio-economic basis for electoral data and examined the relation between socio-economic data and election data of State Legislative Assemblies from 1952 to 1967. The latter included data on electoral participation, competition, and party preference. However, their study seems to have been unsuccessful in finding a meaningful correlation between socio-economic and electoral data, except in the case of electoral participation or turnout.

Dikshit's\textsuperscript{31} research on the Punjab Legislative Assembly elections for the period before 1980, using the ecological method, provided an interesting analysis of turnout and votes for Congress in relation to the variables of social development, reservation, and linguistic and religious factors. The correlations between electoral data and socio-economic variables are not stable in his studies. Other interesting ecological studies are those of Kondo\textsuperscript{32} who used multivariate as well as regression analysis in Lok Sabha elections for the period from 1957 to 1999 to examine correlations between electoral participation namely voter turnout, and number of candidates on the one hand, and socio-

\textsuperscript{30} Biplab Dasgupta, and W H. Morris-Jones, \textit{Patterns and Trends in Indian Politics - An Ecological Analysis of Aggregate Data on Society and Elections}, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1975
\textsuperscript{31} R D. Dikshit, \textit{Geography of Elections: The Indian Context}, Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, 1995
economic variables like literacy, agricultural development, and urbanization on
the other. Kondo’s analysis was conducted on data including both electoral and
socio-economic variables. These studies correlate voter-turnout, votes polled
by major parties, and other variables with various socio-economic aggregate
variables. These studies are included in the category of “ecological studies”.
Although the aggregate data cannot reveal details of the voting behaviours of
the electorate, they can show most accurately how voters behaved as a whole.

Almost all the studies of politics in India seem to touch upon the elections. Of
course, all studies cannot be reviewed. However, some characteristic studies
that analyse Indian politics are examined. *Indian Politics and the 1998 Election*
edited by Rameshray Roy and Paul Wallace\(^33\) emphasize the importance of
regionalism in Indian politics. It also examines a large range of important
electoral issues including changes in party alliances, the role of social factors
such as caste, ethnicity, and religion. In the northeast, S. K. Chaube, *Hill
Politics in North East India*\(^34\), explains the political history of Manipur, the
course of hill politics and the role of traditional chief in the state politics.

*Working of Parliamentary Democracy and Electoral Politics in Northeast India*
edited by Girin Phukan and Adil-ul-yasin (eds.)\(^35\) is a collection of seminar
papers. The papers included in this volume mainly dealt with evaluation of
different elections held in the Northeast; mobilization of social groups and
electoral politics; and working of democracy in northeast India with special
reference to particular issues. *Electoral Politics in Northeast India* edited by


\(^35\) Girin Phukan & Adil-ul-yasin (eds.), *Working of Parliamentary Democracy and Electoral Politics in
P.S. Dutta\textsuperscript{36} aimed to attract the academic activists' attention to the necessity of understanding the political dimension of the socio-economic complexities of North East through the periscope. R. P Singh's, \textit{Electoral Politics in Manipur}\textsuperscript{37} analyzes the political behavior in Manipur in the light of socio-geographical and economic infrastructure and cultural determinants. It also studies the demographic structure of the assembly constituency, the salient features of the election manifestoes of the political parties and some aspects of the electoral campaign. "Electoral Politics in Meghalaya" by A. K. Baruah and Pascal Malngiang in \textit{Ethnic Identities and Democracy}\textsuperscript{38} maintains that in the absence of ideological mobilisations electoral politics are centred on tribe affiliations and thus kinship loyalties override political considerations. "Electoral Politics in Manipur" by Bhagat Oinam in \textit{Ethnic Identities and Democracy}\textsuperscript{39} 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. None of these studies however dealt with the voting behavior with special references to the hill areas of Manipur.

In India, political behavior is not free from the influence of the problems like religion, caste and tribes, insurgency, communalism, terrorism, politics of defection and political instability. All these problems both directly or indirectly influence the electoral politics of the country, because election forms the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item P S Dutta, \textit{Electoral Politics in Northeast India}. Omson Publication, New Delhi. 1986
\item R P Singh, \textit{Electoral Politics in Manipur}, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
substance of democracy and is an important mechanism reflecting popular will. The growing intensity of caste and social conflict and protest movements rooted in violence are consequences of both the public policies pursued and the compulsions of electoral politics. Thus, election studies are important within the discipline of political science. However, given the size of the electorate the magnitude of the problem of conducting election at the macro level can well be appreciated. Hence, electoral studies have been done primarily at the micro level. The present study is an attempt in that direction. Electoral Politics in Manipur, a study of 2002 Assembly Elections in the 4 constituency (i.e.-Tengnoupal, Nungba, Kangpokpi, Saikul) is one such micro level study. The hill areas have been taken up for study as most of the research works on electoral politics in Manipur have been conducted in the plains thereby ignoring the importance of the hill areas in the politics of the state. It is hoped that the area selected for study presents important characteristics of Electoral Politics in the state.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The assembly elections of 2002 in Manipur assumed significance for a number of reasons. Pro-autonomy groups targeted political parties and candidates and made demands for boycott of elections. Moreover, many voluntary organizations like the Committee on Human Rights, Human Rights Alerts also called for a boycott of elections as a protest against a series of human rights violations by the security forces. This election was held at a time when the memory of an eventful episode of the ceasefire agreement between Govt. of

---

India and the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland-NSCN (Isaac Muivah-IM) “without territorial limit” remained at its stillness. Therefore, it will be interesting to know how and why the voters were mobilized to vote in this election.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the various factors that influenced the electoral process in the 2002 Assembly Elections in the four selected constituencies.

(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.
CHAPTERISATION

The Chapters included in this study are:

(a) Electoral Politics and background of elections in Manipur.

(b) Study of political parties, their manifestoes, programs and issues.

(c) The role of chiefs, youth and church.

(d) Issues and people’s reactions.

(e) Analysis of survey data: factors influencing electoral behaviour.

(f) Conclusion.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research was based on primary and secondary sources of information. Primary sources of information were collected from Government acts, rules, public documents, manifestoes, and party documents. To supplement the findings, interview of the respondents were carried out. Interviews were based on a structured 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 were supplemented by participant observation and informal group discussion methods.
Secondary sources of information on the other were collected from books, reports, unpublished thesis, journals, magazines, internet, and other printed materials.

The study employs descriptive survey approach and analyses survey data by tallying and averaging responses using simple statistical percentage calculations. Technique of purposive or non-probability sampling was used in selecting the 4 constituencies (i.e. Tengnoupal, Saikul, Kangpokpi, and Nungba). After selecting the constituencies, 2 polling stations were picked up in each constituency for intensive study. Polling Stations are again sampled by employing the purposive sampling method. After selecting the polling stations, 25 respondents each from selected eight polling stations were selected. The electoral roll, prepared by the election department for assembly elections was used for sampling. A sample of 200 respondents was drawn. The sample was selected on purposive basis.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MANIPUR

The study of voting behavior has a certain background- the geographical and socio-political. A brief description of the place, its recent history, its community organization, ethnic antagonism, small group processes, attitude change, and decision-making in general, is necessary to understand the politics of the state. Voting never takes place in a vacuum. It is a process having a backlog of
events, socio-economic and political, behind it, and having consequences for
different fields of life of the community.  

Manipur, a hill state is situated in the South East of the Northeastern frontier of
India. It lies just north of the Tropic of Cancer extending between latitudes of
23 83’ north, 25 41’ north, and longitudes of 93 03’ east and 94 78’ east. The
attitudes above sea level is 970 meters and covered an area of 22, 327
sq km. Manipur is bounded on the North and West by the state of Nagaland,
the North Cachar Hills, and the Cachar District of Assam, on the East and
South by the Burma including the Somra Tract, the Kabow valley, and the
adjoining Chin Hills. On the South-West corner lays Mizoram. Physiographically, Manipur can be divided into three well-defined regions, each
of them having a direct or indirect impact on the politics setting of the state and
the resultant politico-electoral behavior of the people. These divisions are the
Manipur Valley, the Manipur Hills and the Barak Plains.

In the geographical distribution, Manipur may be simply divided into the valley
at the centre and the hills surrounding it. The valley is the homeland of the
Meitives. The Manipur Hills are the abode of tribes. Some of them are found in
the valley also where they live under the shadow of the Meiteis. However, the
valley was never their forte. Though there are as many as 32 recognized tribes,
they are broadly classified into two major groups, namely (1) the Nagas, and (2)
the Kukis. In the Naga group are included Tangkhul, Mao, Kabui, Kacha Naga,

---

41 Bernard R. Berelson, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*, University of
Chicago Press, USA, 1964, p 4
42 Statistical Handbook of Manipur, Imphal, 1985
New Delhi, 1985 p 3
44 R P Singh, *Opit*, p 4
Maring and Maram tribes. The Kuki-group includes Thadou, Paite, Hmar, Vaiphei, Zou, Mizos, Anal, Simte, Kom and Gangte. The customs of the Naga group resemble those of the other Naga tribes of Nagaland, while the customs of the Kuki group resemble those of the tribes living in Mizoram.\(^45\)

Manipur has a unicameral legislature. The Legislative Assembly of the state has 60 elected members with no provision for nomination. The state has been divided into 60 single member constituencies of which 40 are situated in the central valley, 19 in the hills and 1 in the Barak Basin. All 19 constituencies in the hills areas are reserve for the scheduled tribes. One constituency in the valley, Sekmai, is reserved for the schedule castes. The remaining 40 constituencies-39 in the valley and one in the Barak Basin, are unreserved general constituencies\(^46\).

Manipur merged with the Dominion Government of India on 15th of October 1949. Manipur became a Part C State and the State continued to be administered by the President through a Chief Commissioner or a Lieutenant Governor who acted as his agent. On November 1, 1956, Manipur ceased to be a Part C State. Manipur became a Union Territory under the Union Territorial Council Act, 1956. The Territorial Council consisting of 30 elected Members, and 2 nominated Members was constituted on 16.8.1957. The Territorial Council was later converted into the Territorial Legislative Assembly in June 1963. The Territorial Legislative Assembly consisting of 30 elected Members and 2 nominated members started to function from 23.7.1963. With the enactment of the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organization) Act, 1971 by the

Indian Parliament Manipur was conferred full statehood on 21st January 1972 with a 60 Member Legislative Assembly\(^{47}\).

The state is represented in the Lok Sabha by two members of whom one is reserved for the Scheduled Tribe (ST). It is a member of North Eastern Council (N.E.C) and come under special category states for central financial assistance\(^{48}\). Imphal is the capital city of Manipur. There are 9 districts, 28 subdivisions and 45 Police Stations in the state. Four districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur are in the valley while five district of Chandel, Churachandpur, Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul are in the Hills. There are 31 towns and 2, 182 inhabited villages in the state. The four valley districts excluding the areas, which fall within the Municipalities Town Committees, and other notified areas are covered by the panchayat raj system. There are seven Municipal Councils in the state. Under Manipur District Council Act, 1971, Hill Autonomous District Councils were established since 1972 for the administration of the hill areas\(^{49}\).

Manipuri, which is the mother tongue of the Meeteis and Meetei Panghals (Manipuri Muslims), is the official language and lingua Franca of the state. It is recognized by the National Sahitya academy and is a National Language included in the Eight Schedule of the constitution of India. Besides Manipuri,

\(^{47}\) Ibid
\(^{48}\) Ibid.
there are more than 30 tribal dialects in the state, all belonging to Tibeto-
Burman Languages\(^50\).

There is no land tenure system in the hill areas. The Manipur Land Revenue
and land Reforms Act, 1960 has not been extended to the hill areas. No
transfer of land is allowed to non-tribal communities and outsiders in the
hill\(\text{tribal}\) areas. Thus, hill areas have been provided protection and ensured
autonomy in the administration of their affairs according to their distinct way of
life and culture. Such a separate system combined with historical factors,
geographical divide, ethnicity, and underdevelopment have contributed to lack
of development of common identity among the people of Manipur\(^51\).

In view of the above situation, a brief discussion of the past assembly elections
is considered necessary in order to understand the electoral dynamics in the
state and the assembly elections 2002.

**First Legislative Assembly Elections 1972-1973**

Manipur became a full-fledged State on 21 January 1972 by the enactment of
North-Eastern (Reorganization) Act, 1971. With the attainment of the statehood
the total strength of the legislators were increased from 30 to 60 seats. In the
process, 40 seats fall under the valley and one in the Barak basin, which was
reserved for the Scheduled tribes and 19 seats, were reserved for the hills\(^52\).

---

\(^{50}\) J.N. Das, *Op cit*, p. 10

\(^{51}\) *Ibid*, p. 47.

\(^{52}\) *Ibid*, p. 47.
The delimitation of the constituencies was done based on 1961 census, as the 1971 census was not available. The election for the Legislative Assembly was held on 6th and 8th March 1972 for the hill constituencies and the election for the valley were held on 11th March 1972. The main issues in this election were the inclusion of Manipuri Language in the VIII Schedule to the Indian Constitution and the establishment of a University and a Medical College. The political condition in Manipur during 1972 elections was similar to the political situation in India during 1967 election. As in the fourth general election of 1967 on all-India level, Manipur followed the similar pattern in 1972 in breaking down the dominant Congress party. The manifestoes of all the opposition parties tried to tarnish the image of the Manipur Congress. One noteworthy feature of the assembly election of 1972 was the emergence of Manipur Peoples Party (MPP) as a regional force in the electoral scene. The party secured 15 seats. As a result, the political mindset of the people had reoriented towards parochial regional outlook.

In the 1972 Assembly elections, the congress secured 17 seats out of 60 contested seats and was closely followed by the MPP with 15 seats. The Communist Party of India (CPI), the Socialists and the Kuki National Assembly (KNA) parties secured five, three, and two seats respectively. Although the Congress party emerged as the single largest majority party, the responsibility to form the government was put on the Manipur Peoples Party (MPP). The MPP thus, formed the government with all the parties, except the Congress and the CPI, and forged an alliance—United Legislature Party with strength of 32.

---

53 Ibid, p 95
54 Ibid, p. 94
members. The party elected Md. Alimuddin as their leader, who was later on invited by the Governor to form the Government.\textsuperscript{55} The political trend favouring regionalism was proved when the MPP form the coalition government with other like-minded political parties and independents. However, the House lost nine members when they defected and joined the opposition party\textsuperscript{56}. Clearly, Alimuddin with 26 members was in the minority and had to resign on March 1973 amidst the battle of defections and no-confidence motion. The result was that the President’s Rule was imposed in Manipur.

\textbf{Second Legislative Assembly Elections 1974-1979}

Manipur went through a mid-term poll in early 1974 to elect her 60 members after a ten-month spell of President’s Rule. Five National Parties, viz., the Congress (i), the Congress (o), the Socialist, Communist Party of India (CPI-M) and three Regional Parties- Manipur Peoples Party (MPP), Kuki National Assembly (KNA), and Manipur Hill Union (MHU) besides a large number of Independent candidates contested this election. The Congress Party secured only 12 seats. The Socialist Party secured only two seats. Two of the National Parties-the Congress (o) and the CPI-M returned blank though they contested 13 and 3 seats respectively. The regional parties as a whole had put up a better show in this election mainly because of their selective contest and regional appeal\textsuperscript{57}. One remarkable feature of this election was the emergence of another regional party; The Manipur Hill Union (MHU), which contested for the first time and had a great success by getting 15 out of 16 seats it put up in the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, p. 179.
The Kuki National Assembly (KNA) returned two seats. In addition, the Independent candidates secured only seven seats though they contested as many as 43 seats.

This time also local issues dominated the electoral scene. The main issues in this election were the protection of territorial integrity of the state, withdrawal of Assam Rifles from Kangla (Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple), development of Manipuri language as an official language, withdrawal of Armed Forces Powers Act (AFSPA). The AFSPA is one of the more draconian legislations that the Indian Parliament passed. Under this Act, all security forces are 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 the public order, etc.58

The 1974 mid-term Assembly poll could not produce a desired result and the state plunged into an era of coalition government. The United Legislative Party (ULP) formed the government after the election on the 4th March 1974, under the leadership of Md. Alimuddin (MPP). The ULP ministry survived for about four months. After the ouster, the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) government of Yangmaso Shaiza was installed on 10th July 1974. In about five months time the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) ministry collapsed and on 16th December 1974, Democratic Legislature Party government (DLP) was installed in the office, which survived for about 8 months. In the wake of National Emergency the Congress government, on the 23rd June 1975, which

---

was headed by R.K. Dorendro Singh, replaced the Democratic Legislature Party government. This government continued during the period of National Emergency in the country. Before the end of the Emergency, the sixth Lok Sabha Elections 1977 were held and the Congress captured both the Manipur seats.

After the Lok Sabha poll of 1977, which brought about the first non-Congress coalition Janata ministry at the Centre, the whole Congress Party of Manipur defected to Janata and formed the first Janata government in Manipur with Y. Shaiza as its leader. However, with the split of the Janata at the Centre, the Janata party in Manipur also went out and the Legislative Assembly dissolved on November 14, 1979.

Third Legislative Assembly Elections 1980-1985

The Seventh Assembly Election was held in January 1980 along with the Lok Sabha elections. The seats secured by the parties in the third Assembly Elections (1980) were the following: the Congress secured 13 seats, Janata Party secured 10 seats. CPI and CPI-M won five and one seat respectively. The two regional parties, the MPP and KNA won four and two seats respectively. The main issues in this election also were the inclusion of Manipuri language in the VIII Schedule and removal of AFSPA, 1958.

---

59 Ibid, p.182.
61 Ibid, p. 91.
63 Ibid, p. 91.
One of the striking pictures of this election results was the position of the independent candidates. They managed to get 20 seats. In spite of any party getting absolute majority, the Congress was the single largest party with 13 seats and forged a coalition government with the Congress (u) and the MPP after admitting most of the successful independent candidates under the leadership of R.K Dorendro Singh. As Indira Gandhi wave was revived in the early eighties, the Janata party Government collapsed at the Centre. As such, its impact too was felt in Manipur also. The impact of personality of the candidates was also felt among the people, as shown by the election of 20 independent candidates.

Fourth Legislative Assembly Elections 1985-1990

Political instability has been the unique feature of Manipur politics, with legislators changing very often from one party to another. However, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in October 1984, the sympathy wave for the Congress (i) swept the whole country. Manipur was no exception. That was why in the State Assembly elections on December 24th and 27th, 1984 the Congress (i) secured 30 seats, while the MPP secured three, Janata-four, KNA and CPI with one each and twenty-one independents. Later on, the Congress (i) gained the majority by admitting four independents. It was the single party majority government led by Rishang Keishing who was sworn-in on January 3, 1985. It may here be pointed out that the image of the Congress party, which swept the Lok Sabha election at the centre also influenced the electoral

---

65 Ibid, p.190.
outcome in Manipur. The main issues in this election again were the removal of AFSPA, 1958 and the inclusion of Manipuri language in the VIII schedule.

**Fifth Legislative Assembly Elections 1990-1995**

One significant feature, which may be crucially noted in the 1990 elections, was that the formation of the National Front Govt. at the centre had its fallout in the politics of the state. Strategically, six anti-Congress parties, including Janata Dal, CPI, Congress (S), CPI-M and KNA under the leadership of MPP, forged an alliance—United Legislature Front (ULF) thus putting up a joint front against the Congress.

The main issue in this election was the demand for the inclusion of Manipuri language in the VIII Schedule. The 1990 Elections did not produce any single party commanding a majority in the house. The party position of the elections was Congress-26, JD-11, MPP-11, ICS-6, CPI-3, KNA-2 and NPP-1 seats.

The United Legislature Front (ULF) formed the coalition ministry with R.K. Ranbir Singh as Chief Minister on February 23rd, 1990. However, the ULF coalition could not provide a stable government due to internal bickering. The result of such internal strife enabled the Congress (i) to take over power for some time with R. K. Ranbir Singh as Chief Minister. However, the Congress (i) led coalition also could not survive due to ethnic violence in the state. 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.

---

December 13, 1994, Rishang Keishing replaced R.K. Dorendro Singh as Chief Minister and he took the party to the next Assembly Elections in February 1995.

**Sixth Legislative Assembly Elections 1995-2000**

The next General Elections were held on February 16 and 19, 1995. The results were as follows: The Congress secured 22 seats, Manipur Peoples Party (MPP)-18, Janata Dal (JD)-7, Communist Party of India (CPI)-2, Naga People’s Party (NPP)-2, Samata party (SAP)-2, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-1, Congress (S), Federal Party of Manipur (FPM)-1 and Independents-3 seats.

A coalition ministry under Rishang Keishing (Congress) as Chief Minister was installed on February 25, 1995. However, the Keishing coalition ministry lasted for 35 months. The House was summoned on December 15, 1997, for a vote of confidence. The motion was lost by 17 to 38. When Keishing was voted out, the four-party coalition called the United Front formed a coalition ministry with W. Nipamacha (Manipur State Congress Party-MSCP, a splinter group of Congress) as Chief Minister along with other Ministers from MSCP, and three from MPP. The other two coalition partners were the FPM and the CPI. Though MSCP was the product of leadership dispute within the Congress, there was a need of such a party with the collapse of MPP. Several reasons can be attributed towards the rise of the MSCP of which the factor of rising regional sentiment should be considered as paramount. In the 1995 elections two regional parties, FPM and NPP were formed. For the first time, BJP secure one seat in the state. In the politics of violence, they are more
pronounced. The main issues in this election were the removal of AFSPA, shifting of Assam Rifles from Kangla and to solve the ethnic problems.

**Seventh Legislative Assembly Elections 2000-2001**

The next election was held in 2000. An important feature of this election was pre-poll alliance. There were three alliances. First was United Front consisting of FPM and MSCP. The second was Secular Democratic Front of Congress (I), MPP, CPI and JD (secular). The third was Manipur Democratic Alliance of BJP, Samata Party (SP) and the KNA. The important issues in this election were to protect the territorial integrity of the state, removal of AFSPA, removal of Assam Rifles from Kangla and to solve the problem of insurgency.

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

---

party, 18 MLAs left the MSCP for the BJP. The total strength of the BJP subsequently increased to 26, when two more MLAs from the FPM joined it.\textsuperscript{75}

A fresh crisis emerged when the BJP, with strength of 26 MLAs, wanted to join the Samata Party government on the condition that the new coalition government is led by the BJP and that Koijam step down in favour of the BJP's R.K. Dorendra. This formula was not acceptable to the Samata Party. The issue was referred to the respective high commands of the two parties. However, even the intervention of Home Minister L.K. Advani and Samata Party leader George Fernandes could not resolve the crisis. The Koijam government fell after BJP MLAs voted for a no-confidence motion against it\textsuperscript{76}.

\textbf{Eighth Legislative Assembly Elections 2002-2007}

The eighth assembly election was held on February 14 and 21, 2002 in the valley and hill constituencies respectively. The issues, which ruled the electoral battle, were concerned with the protection of the territorial integrity of the state, problem of insurgency and stopping of human rights violations by the security forces\textsuperscript{77}.

The eight Assembly Elections in Manipur assumes significance for a number of reasons. The campaign for the elections started late and in a dull atmosphere. Many organizations placed restriction on setting up camps, use of intoxicants, distribution of money, etc., which were the usual practices in the past. The idea behind was that elections should be less expensive.

\textsuperscript{75} Assembly Elections- Accessed through www.hinduonnet.com/line/fline/1905/19050150.htm-8 11 07.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
Another special feature was the initiative taken by some of the tribal leaders for the Naga cause. First, was the launching of a new political party- the Naga National Party (NPP) that put up 6 candidates for the first time at Chandel, Phungyar, Mao, Tadubi and Kangpokpi constituencies. Secondly, formation of two fronts: (i) Secular Democratic Front (SDF) and (ii) Democratic People’s Alliance (DPA) will enable to have a more healthy democratic process. The first is, formed by the INC, MSCP, CPI and NCP, which has got 35 members supported from the outside by a lone member of the MNC. The rest of the parties formed the other front.

The significance of the 2002 assembly elections lies in the fact that it has appeared to have evolved a new leadership pattern in the state as the renowned and experienced politicians were defeated in the battle of ballots by comparatively younger blood since 41 out of 58 members of the Seventh State Assembly lost their positions. The losers included the Chief Ministers in the last two years, W.N. Singh and Radhabinod Koijam, as well as the longest serving Chief Minister of the state, Rishang Keishing. This indicates the loss of people’s faith on the aged-old politicians of the state. The last feature was the introduction of electronic voting machines at 6 valley constituencies in the state76.

76 Ibid

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTY</th>
<th>SEATS CONTESTED</th>
<th>SEATS WON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPM</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSCP</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD (u)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRPP</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNLP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lok Shakti</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The elections have presented Manipur with a hung Assembly as none of the political parties secured a simple majority in the 60-member House. The Congress (I) emerged as the largest single party by winning 20 out of the 60
seats. (Its previous tally was 10 seats.) The FPM proved that it was the strongest of the five regional parties in the fray, by finishing close behind with 13 seats. The MSCP, which formed the government in coalition with the FPM in 2000, won six. The CPI which failed to win any seat in 2000, won five of the 15 seats it contested. The BJP won four seats. Its ally, the Samata Party, which was instrumental in bringing down the United Front government of the MSCP and the FPM, won three seats. The NCP won three seats, the MPP two, the DRPP two and the MPC one. The congress with the help of MSCP, CPI and the NCP formed the govt. under the banner of Manipur Secular Front.

Finally Okram Ibobi Singh was chosen as the leader of the Manipur Secular Front thereby making him the Chief Minister. His cabinet was sworn in on March 7, 2002 along with Konthoujam Govindas, Pheiroijam Parijat and Chungkhokai Doungel as cabinet ministers.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Elections Results of the Four Sampled Constituencies**

The selected 4 constituencies are 42- Tengnoupal Assembly Constituency, 46- Saikul Assembly Constituency, and 54- Nungba Assembly Constituency. 46-Saikul Assembly Constituency and 50- Kangpokpi Assembly Constituency are located in Senapati District. The Senapati District is located in the northern part of Manipur. The Senapati District was earlier known as Manipur North District, which came into existence w.e.f 14 November 1969 with its headquarters at Karong. Later the district headquarter was shifted to Senapati on 13 December 1976. The District came to be known as Senapati District w.e.f 15 July 1983. Several communities like
Mao, Maram, Poumai, Thangal, Zemai, Liangmai, Roungmei, Tangkhul, Meetei, Kuki, Nepalese, Vaiphei, Chothe, Chiru, and Maring inhabit the district. In Saikul constituency, C. Doungel could hold its position all along since 1990 but each time on the ticket of different political party. In 2002 elections, C. Doungel as an NCP candidate secured the highest number of votes polled (35.36%)\(^80\). The turnout of voters in this constituency was quite high (91.19%)\(^81\).

The other constituency from Senapati district- kangpokpi has witnessed the electoral victory of Thangminlen Kipgen for three consecutive terms (1995, 2000, 2002.) but each time with different party tag.

54-Nungba Assembly Constituency is located in Tamenglong District. Zaliangrong Nagas, Kuki, Chiru and Hmar inhabit the district\(^82\). In this constituency, the voters are divided between two important candidates- Gaikhangam of congress and Gangumei Kamei of FPM. In 1984 and in 1990 Gaikhangam could secure the highest number of votes by defeating Gangumei kamei of the FPM. The scene was changed in 1995 and 2000 when Gangumei Kamei secured the highest number of votes and defeated Gaikhangam. However, in 2002 the congress candidate Gaikhangam once again defeated his rival Gangumei kamei\(^83\). Such swing of votes is really an interesting matter.

42-Tengnoupal Assembly Constituency is located in Chandel District. Chandel District (formerly known as Tengnoupal District) came into existence on May


\(^{81}\) Ibid.


13, 1974. The District lies in the south-eastern part of Manipur. The district is inhabited by several communities. It is sparsely inhabited by about 20 different tribes. They are scattered all over the district. Prominent tribes in the district are Anal, Lamkang, Kuki, Moyon, Monsang, Chothe, Thadou, Paite, Maring and Zou etc. There are also other communities like Meiteis and Muslims in small numbers as compared to the tribes. Non-Manipuri’s like Nepalese, Tamils, Bengalis, Punjabis and Biharis are also settled in this district. In this constituency, Korungthang of SAP secured the highest votes defeating a NCP candidate. In 2000, a NCP candidate got the highest number of votes. In 1995, a congress candidate became an MLA defeating MPP candidate. Turn out of voters in this constituency (2002) was very high (98.77%).

In the selected 4 constituencies, the total electors ranged between 15423 in Nungba to 33040 in Tengnoupal. Among these, the highest number of males and females voters is found in Tengnoupal-16478 males and 16594 females. The total votes polled were the highest in Tengnoupal-33040 votes and the lowest in Kangpokpi-23236, which is 99.77% and 88.88% of the total votes polled. The highest number of rejected votes was registered in Kangpokpi constituency (304). Amongst the 4 constituencies, Tengnoupal cover the largest number of polling stations i.e. 43. Saikul constituency cover 39, Kangpokpi cover 29 and Nungba cover 32 polling stations. In all the 4 constituencies, female voters outnumbered male voters. However, there was not a single women candidate in these constituencies.

---

86 Ibid.
Manipur has come across eight Assembly Elections since it attained statehood (i.e., in 1972, 1974, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2002). In Manipur since 1972, the election results have shown that the turnout was high and that there was political fragmentation and hung assemblies. Defections have been the bane of Manipur politics. Between the elections of 1967 and the imposition of the National Emergency (1971) five ministries fell. Again Manipur is ethnically and politically a fragmented state. Since 1972 to the present day only once did a political party get 30 out of 60 Assembly seats i.e., the congress in 1984. Yet, since March 1972 Manipur mostly had Congress governments under alternating leaders or Presidents Rule.

Thus, going by the political history of Manipur, no single party has been able to command an absolute majority since it attained statehood in 1972. After each election, coalition govt. was the only answer. Instability appears to be inherent in Manipur politics. Besides, the lack of political vision and ambitious corrupt politicians are other contributing factors of instability. The emergence of armed groups and their intervention in the electoral politics have brought significant changes in the politics of the state.

After giving a detailed background of elections in the state from 1972 to 2002, in the next chapter an attempt will be made to study the political parties in Manipur, their manifestoes and electoral performances in the state.

---

89 *Ibid*, p 258