

**POLITICAL ALLIANCE: A STUDY OF PARTIES AND  
PARTY SYSTEM IN THE NORTH-EASTERN STATES OF  
MANIPUR AND MEGHALAYA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2002**

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### **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this Dissertation entitled "**Political Alliance: A study of Parties and Party system in the North-Eastern states of Manipur and Meghalaya**" submitted by **Kshetri Rajiv Singh** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university and this is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*Dedicated*  
*to*  
*Baba & Mamma*

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	: i
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	: ii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	: iii - iv
<b>PREFACE</b>	: v -vi
<b>CHAPTER - I:</b>	
<b>Party and Party System</b>	: 01 - 18
1. A Theoretical Discussion	
1.1 Meaning	
1.2 Emergence	
1.3 Nature and Importance	
2. Party System in India: One Party Dominance	
3. Decline of the Congress Party: The Emergence of Regional Political Parties	
<b>CHAPTER – II</b>	
<b>North East India</b>	: 19 - 46
1. An Overview on its Socio - Economic and Political Condition	
2. Rise of Regional Parties in North-East India	
3. Manipur: A Political History	
3.1 Manipur People’s Party and Other Political Parties	
4. Meghalaya: A Note on its Political History	
4.1 Political Parties in Meghalaya: A Historical Development of All Hill Party Leader’s Conference and Other Political Parties	
<b>CHAPTER – III</b>	
<b>Political Trends in North East India: A Case of Manipur and Meghalaya</b>	: 47 - 89
1. Electoral Politics in India’s North East Region	
2. Electoral History of Manipur	
3. Dynamics of Political Defection	
3.1 History of Political Defection in Manipur	
4. Coalition Experience and Electoral Politics in Meghalaya	
5. Political Alliance: An imperative of Coalition Politics in North East	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	: 90 - 98
<b>APPENDIX</b>	: 99 - 102
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	:103 - 109

## *Acknowledgement*

The whole process in completion of this dissertation involves a motley group of people who have intentionally contributed their ideas and thoughts.

I am fully indebted to Prof. B.N. Mohapatra, my supervisor for his careful guidance and unfailing support throughout the course of my work. Wanshai played a dominant role in producing this work into its actual form. Discussions with Syed, Samuel, Tamo Mani, Homen and others are of immense constructive force. I also acknowledge my deepest thanks to Aruna and Jyotishree for their psychological support and encouragement.

Papa, Mama, and sisters deserve my special thanks, without whose concern and co-operation, it would have remained as a dream of the day.

I hold the responsibility for any errors, if any, in this work.

**The 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2002**

**Kshetri Rajiv Singh**

## LIST OF THE TABLES

Sl. No.	Name of the Table
Table: 1	The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election, 1972 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur
Table: 2	The Party-wise Electoral Performance in the Mid-Term Assembly Election (1974) in Manipur
Table: 3	The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election, 1980 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur
Table: 4	The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election of 1984 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur
Table: 5	Party-wise Performance in the 5 <sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 1990
Table: 6	Party-wise Performance in the 6 <sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 1995
Table: 7	Party-wise Performance in the 7 <sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 2000
Table: 8	The Party-wise electoral Performance of Mid-Termed General election, 2002 to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur.
Table: 9	Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 1 <sup>st</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1972
Table: 10	Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1978
Table: 11	Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1983.
Table: 12	Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 5 <sup>th</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1993.
Table: 13	Party-wise Perfomance in the Different Hill Areas in the 6 <sup>th</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1998.

## LIST OF THE ABBREVIATIONS

APHLC	All People's Hill Legislature Council
AGP	Asom Gana Parisad
MPP	Manipur People's Party
MPP	Meghalaya People's Party
MHU	Manipur Hill Union
MSCP	Manipur State Congress Party
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
JNP	Janata Party
JD	Janata Dal
CPI	Communist Party of India
KNA	Kuki Nationalist Assembly
NNP	Naga Nationalist Party
CPM	Communist Party (Marxist)
ULF	United Legislature Front
INC	Indian National Congress
FPM	Federal Party of Manipur
MNC	Manipur Nationalist Congress
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party
RJD	Rastriya Janata Dal
JD(S)	Janata Dal (Secular)
SOC	Socialist Party
ULP	United Legislature Party
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
CLP	Congress Legislative Party
UF	United Front
NSCN(IM)	Nationa Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak- Muivah)
CM	Chief Minister
PR	President's Rule
HSPDP	Hill State People's Democratic Party
UMPDF	United Meghalaya Parliamentary Forum
PDIC	People's Demand Implementation Council
HPU	Hill People's Union
APHLC(AM)	All People's Hill Legislature Council (Marak)
UDP	United Democratic Party
UMDP	United Meghalaya Democratic Party
SAP	Samata Party
MC	Manipur Congress
JD(U)	Janata Dal (United)
NPP	Nationalist People's Party

ICS	Indian National Congress(Secular)
INC(U)	Indian National Congress (United)
INC(I)	Indian National Congress (Indira)
NCO	Congress(O)
RMC	Rural Medical Colege
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
SDF	Secular Democratic Front
Consts.	Constituencies
Ind.	Independents



## PREFACE

Democracy's desirability is taken to be because of its fairness as a decision procedure and the opportunity for representation. For proper functioning of democracy, it needs 'institutions for realizing its ideals. A large and a complex society like India requires the mediation of institutions to regulate the actions of individuals and groups.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, it becomes pertinent here to study the nature and functions of political parties which constitutes a basic element of democratic institutional apparatus. Therefore, this study is constructed on the hypothesis that political parties represent a kind of social formation with some distinctive characteristics of society in which the parties emerge and become the determinant force for the nature of government. A political party not only provides a forum for the expression of the aspirations from different sections of a society but also a mechanism which performs the functions of resolving the societal conflicts by involving the process of governance.

Keeping in mind, the importance of the study of political parties, this study draws a complex scenario of Indian politics and a declining state of institutions.

The first chapter presents a brief theoretical discussions on the meaning and the origin of political parties and party-system. Focusing on the Indian context, it also includes a analytical framework for the emergence of political parties in the country. Emphasising that 'India has

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<sup>1</sup> B.N. Mohapatra, "The Problem", issue on 'Rethinking Institutions', *Seminar 456*, August, 1997, p. 15.

experienced every type of party',<sup>2</sup> it also deals the dynamism of the party system in India. At the end of the chapter, it reflects the decline of the one party dominance system and the emergence of regional political parties in India.

In the second chapter, it deals with socio-political history of India's Northeastern states, especially Manipur and Meghalaya where the political instability and the uncertainty of the political parties have been an age-old tradition since their inception. It also includes the historical background for the growth of regional or state-based political parties in these states. This chapter focuses not only on the relevance of the regional parties but also their ups and downs in the politics of the state.

The third chapter reflects the political trend of the region. Considering the importance of electoral process as a characteristic of democratic principle it deals with a vast historical scenario of elections and its implications in the states of Manipur and Meghalaya from their state formation. As the political party plays a decisive role in reflecting the interest of different ethnic communities of the region, it becomes relevant to examine such electoral trend and the outcome of the political parties in the state. With the entry of coalition politics, it also seeks to analyse the process of political alliance among the different political parties. Finally, this chapter also deals with a serious threat of political defection and the changing loyalty of politicians from one party to another. In order to understand the nature and functioning of the political parties, this chapter precisely provides the behaviour of the electorates in the region.

**Kshetri Rajiv Singh**

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<sup>2</sup> David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Pranoy Roy, "India Decides: Elections 1952 – 1995", in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *State and Politics in India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1998, p. 144.

# CHAPTER: I

## Party and Party System

### 1. A Theoretical Discussion

The study of political parties and party system has always been and continues to be central to the understanding of politics. But the study of party organization per se has had its ups and downs. The political parties and the party system they form constitute the major channels of interest aggregation in contemporary democracy. Political parties are in fact considered to be indispensable for the successful working of democracy. They are vehicles through which political elites supply policy alternatives and they constitute the major route for the citizens to articulate the demand for such alternatives.<sup>1</sup> Political parties play a crucial role in shaping the nature of democratic governance because they help legitimize the state. As democracy assumes the presence of different views and free exercise of conflicting opinions, political parties tend to function as the proper engine of such continuous plebiscite. Political parties also have long been the most important mediating institution between citizens and the state, in particular as they act as simultaneous agents both for the state and its citizens.<sup>2</sup> While virtually all democracies have political parties that compete for office, political systems differ in a number of ways with regard to how they go about channeling

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<sup>1</sup> H.D. Klingemann, R. Hofferbert and I. Budge, as cited in Christopher J. Anderson, 'Party and Party system and Satisfaction with Democratic Performance in the new Europe', *Political Studies*, 1998, XLVI, p.p. 572-588,

<sup>2</sup> R. Katz and P. Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organisation: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, I.I. (1995), p.p. 5-28,

inputs or providing policy alternatives, and with regard to the roles they assign to parties in this process.

### **1.1. Meaning**

The term “Political Party” means different things to different people. Most of the time, it refers to several types of groups. Generally, political parties in both their forms and functions, explains the process by which they make democracy responsive to the people. Therefore, political parties are indispensable to a democratic form of government, and should be taken into a deep appreciation of their contribution to the entire political system. Edmund Burke defined a party as a body of men united for promoting their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular in which they all agree.<sup>3</sup> According to him, it has certain principles and a clear programme. C.A. Beard also regards parties as mainly agencies of interest but also capable of drawing interest together in such a way as to become a motor or an independent force.<sup>4</sup>

In the words of McDonald, ‘to regard political parties as determinant organization with defined boundaries which are potentially capable, as formations, of taking over the government much as a character would take over a construction task, is a rather natural way

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<sup>3</sup> E. Burke as quoted in Lain Hampsher- Monk, ‘The Political Philosophy of Edmund Burke’, Longman, London and New York, 1987, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> C.A. Beard in Nail A. Mc Donald, ‘The Study of Political Parties’, Random House, New York, 1963, p. 27.

to consider such social formation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, McDonald considers political parties as types of social formations, and as determinant organizations. On the other hand, political parties are also regarded ideally as bodies deliberately organized to mobilize an expressed mass opinions in connection with public issues. A political party is, first of all, an organized attempt to capture power.<sup>6</sup> By defining power as control of government, Schattschneider goes on to point out that the aim to get control of government is what distinguishes a party from a pressure group. Similarly, political parties, according to V.O. Key Jr., are lineal descendents of two sorts of groups that recurs in the annals of governance: those that conspire to overthrow the government and those that are really around to define and maintain the regime.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the emergence of political parties at any given time, also reflects the situation that the task of recruiting political leadership and making public policy, could no longer be handled by a small coterie of men unconcerned with public sentiments.<sup>8</sup> Thus, J. Lapalombara and Myron Weiner suggested that political party emerges whenever the notion of a political power comes to include the idea that the masses must participate or need to be controlled. However, the fundamental difficulty in defining the term 'Political Parties' is

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<sup>5</sup>Nail A. Mc Donald. *op. cit.* p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>E. E. Schattschneider, *'Party Government'*, Rinehart, New York, 1942, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup>V.O. Key Jr, *Politics and Pressure Group*, Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, New York, Harvard University, Fifth Edition, 1969, p. 163.

<sup>8</sup>J. Lapalombara and Myron Weiner (ed.), *'The Origin and Development of Political Parties'*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1966, p.p. 3-4.

that it is applicable without discrimination to many types and near group.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is not so surprising when Maurice Duverger provides no definition of party and he limits himself by saying that “a party is a community with a particular structure.”<sup>10</sup> Though political parties are defined in various ways, yet, in overall analysis, by political parties we generally mean as the articulate organization of society’s political agents those who are concerned with the control of government power and who compete for popular support with another group or groups holding divergent views. As such, it is a great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to governmental institutions and relates them to political actions within the larger political community.

## 1.2. Emergence

Political development may be understood as a movement towards a political system which is capable of handling the loads it confronts, characterized by significant differentiation of structures and specificity of functions, increasingly centralized and able to maintain itself.<sup>11</sup> Political Parties and party system may have an important impact on the course of such development. The emergence of parties marks a significant elaboration of structure and a movement toward relative political efficiency. Parties, thus emerge, developed distinctive sets of ‘in group’ perspective with emotional overtones, or ideologies

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<sup>9</sup> V.O. Key Jr., *op. cit.*, p.163.

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Duverger, ‘*Political Parties: their Organisation and Activities in the modern State*’, Johnwiley & Sons Inc., New York, 1984, p. xv.

<sup>11</sup> Winfred E. A. Bernhard (ed.), ‘*Political Parties in American History*’, Capricorn Books, New york, 1973, Vol.-1, p. 1.

that helped to bind party structure together and popular following to the parties.<sup>12</sup> Political Parties also emerge out of certain sets of conditions, confront certain problem or loads in the political system and perform interrelated functions which may contribute to political integration. What the conditions are, determine, in part, the shape, party structure will take, the function they will perform, and how they will perform them.<sup>13</sup>

The term 'Political parties' emerged in the nineteenth century with the development of representative institutions and the expansion of suffrage in Europe and the United States.<sup>14</sup> It can be seen as a useful institutional index of the level of political development. Political development implies among other things a measure of political participation by large member of people who do not belong to dominant political elite.<sup>15</sup> J. Lapalombara and Weiner suggest three types of theory of party origin; firstly, the institutional theories which focus on the relationship between early parliaments and the emergence of the parties; secondly, historical situation theory that suggests and stresses on the historical crises of task which system has encountered at the moment in time when parties developed; and finally, developmental theories that relate parties to the broader process of modernization. Thus, it would appear that it is the occurrence of political crises of systematic magnitude at a point of time when sufficient modernization has taken place to provide conditions for

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph A. Schleisinger, 'Political Parties' in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science*, Macmillan, New York, London, Vol.-10, p. 428.

<sup>15</sup> J. Lapalombara and M. Weiner, *op. cit.* p. 21.

development that causes parties to emerge.<sup>16</sup> However, in the opinions of M. Duverger, parties originated from two distinct aspects of the electoral process, viz, Parliamentary and Extra- Parliamentary in which D.W. Brogan termed it as ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ parties.<sup>17</sup> According to Duverger, externally created parties tend to be more centralized than those that are created internally, more ideologically coherent and disciplined, less subject to influence from the legislative of the parties. It is also suggested that the origin of political parties is deeply associated historically with crises and is also closely bound up with the general process of modernization.

As a general theory or hypothesis, the most basic condition associated with the emergence of political parties in the modern sense may be summarized under four major headings; first, the emergence of a significant national common political arena, which influence of power may be sought with reference to the decision making center and the offices of a common political system: secondly, the development of differentiation of complexities within the political system in terms of interest opinion and in terms of governmental structure and ideologies which permit or encourage some form of popular or mass politics and substantial elections; and lastly, a sense of felt need to develop political structures to establish relationship between leaders and popular group of fellow leaders are to win and hold power and governmental functions are to be performed.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> M. Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. vii.



### 1.3. Nature and Importance

In a particular political system, it is often found that different parties based on certain principles having varied aims and objectives differ in their nature and function also different. However, classification of parties can be made in accordance with substantive character of the basic organizational unit or organizing nucleus. By distinguishing parties in the terms of what he calls 'doctrinal' and 'non-doctrinal' parties, Mc. Donald is of the view that a party based on doctrine as characterized by the fact that its basis of appeal function largely in the realm of principles and moral argumentation. Whereas parties whose appeal and organizing basis rest upon shared interest or identity constitute the bulk of party based which may be regarded essentially non-doctrinal in nature.<sup>18</sup> According to him, region or section may furnish a party basis, and regional or sectional homogeneity may be an important aspect of either a doctrinal or non-doctrinal element in a party.

Keeping the good of the whole of society as paramount, a party however has to aggregate or to relate organically cross sectional interest by shifting the essential from the peripheral and universal from the particular. For this, it has further to have a perspective of its own that gives an orientation to the demands made by various sections in society.

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<sup>18</sup> Nail A. Mc Donald, *op. cit.*, p. 23

Maurice Duverger classified parties into three different types on the basis of strength: (a) parties with a majority bent, that is, party which command on an absolute majority in parliament; (b) major parties, and (c) minor parties.<sup>19</sup> He further goes on to distinguish parties in terms of 'direct' and indirect' structure and in terms of whether the basic organizational unit a branch, a cell or a multitude unit. Parties with direct structure are those whose members or affiliates are related directly, i.e., a party which has individual as its own member, and indirect parties are those which are built upon other social formation as their basic component unit. In such a type, the individual comes to acquire party membership or affiliation only by virtue of his/her membership in a non- party agency. For expanding the party into larger network, the 'political socialization' is that important function whereby a political party educates society politically by inculcating in it the norms and values that will enable it to strive for the optional pattern of power relationship in relation to its tasks. In order to socialize the masses actively, an active membership under competent leadership is also an important requirement of the political party. Thus, recruitment is an intra-party function in as much as it concerns the party in its own composition. But, it also aims at imbuing the party ideology to its members and motivating them to be active in the implementation of the party organization and programme.

Of course, political parties are most articulate where societal goals are concerned. Because, it is they who contend for political power in order to realize those very goals as

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<sup>19</sup> Maurice Duverger, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

perceived and formulated by them. Political parties therefore have to concern themselves with the social function of environmental adjustment and this task they perform by their articulation of foreign policy which they seek to relate to domestic policy so that pattern maintenance, goal attainment and environmental adjustment go hand in hand. On the other hand, no party can ignore altogether the vital interest of the people and seek to impose its perception, norms and values on them unilaterally. In fact, a party may champion the cause of 'autonomy' for a particular state or region or may agitate for the industrial development or greater resources allocation, etc.; but without some minimum support from the masses, it cannot put forward these demands.

In course of time, the profound concern in contemporary society for effective popular participation in decision-making has put a fresh emphasis on the connection between parties and democracy. Thus, "the study of political parties is virtually a prerequisite to a realistic understanding of the problems of democracy, both in theory and in action."<sup>20</sup> One of the distinguishing feature of parties is decentralization in organizational structure and in locus of power. This lack of centralization has proved advantageous to the local party units as power is concentrated at the base of the organization rather than in a national leadership, which exercises strict control over the state. Thus, the history of parties, once narrowly construed as the history of elections, has in recent year, been reconsidered and altered. Political scientist, borrowing approaches from the behavioral sciences, have

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<sup>20</sup> Averly Leiserson, 'The Place of Parties in the studies of Politics', *American Political Science Review*, December, 1957, Vol. LI, p. 94.

based their analysis of parties on empirical proposition and theories of a systematic sort, tested by closer, more direct and more rigorously controlled observation of political events.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, the picture of party becomes static and categorical. Every society tends to break into self-centered groups rivaling each other for control of the state. These inherently undesirable factions develop into party that tends to corrupt and threaten the stability of political order in the country. The parties give vent to man's worst passions; parties also promoted conflict and inevitability lead to chaos, if they were given freedom and were not constrained. However, the party must take into account the needs and interests of large blocks of people, trying to balance conflicting goals and win over the individual voter.

## **2. Party System in India: One Party Dominance**

The evolution of party system is a complex process. It refers not only to a political party or a group of them but also to a complex political process that goes beyond individual leaders, social associations, political groups and organizations to the intricate system/pattern of interactions are reflected in ideologies and personalities, party building and fragmentation, coalescence and split, cooperation and opposition, support and protest, voter mobilization and electoral competition. Thus, party system has emerged as a part of a complex political process.

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<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Dahl, 'The Behavioural Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest', *American Political Science Review*, December, 1961, Vol. LV, p. 766.

In India, the emergence and growth of political parties is obviously related to the rise of nationalism. When we look at the political parties in India, our eyes fall first on the Indian National Congress. On 28 December 1885, 72 gentlemen met in the hall of the Gokuldash Tejpal Sanskrit College and boarding house in Bombay to attend the inaugural session of what was originally called the Indian National Union. It can easily be identified as the day when not merely a political party but a composite system, took birth in the country.<sup>22</sup> Later renamed as the Indian National Congress, it gradually became synonymous with the Indian National Movement and later with the party system in the country. Thus, the development of political parties in India differed in many ways from their development in Great Britain and the European continent. The political struggle against the British imperial has permitted Indian big business, the intelligentsia, the weavers, the shopkeepers and peasants to join together against a single enemy. In fine, the national movement played a central role in the lives of virtually all educated Indians. Large sections of the educated community were organized around the task of achieving self-government; the way to obtain including status and prestige was also through political economic activity.<sup>23</sup>

Emphasizing the role of associations in creating the super structure of party system in the country, Anil Seal points out that 'Associations brought nineteenth century India

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<sup>22</sup> R.N. Ravinder Kumar and M. N. Das, *Concise History of Indian National Congress, 1885-1947*, issued under the auspices of the Congress Centenary (1985) Celebration Committee, Vikas Publishing Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

<sup>23</sup> Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India: the Development of Multi-Party System*, Low Price Publication, New Delhi, 1990, p. 7.

across the threshold of modern politics. Sometime religious zeal, sometimes caste solidarity encouraged the people toward association but during the course of the century more of the association in India were brought into being by groups of men united by secular interests. What held them together were common skills and functions, a common educational backward, and common aspirations and resentment against the policies of the Raj, not simply the bonds of joint family, caste and district. There was a time when these would have been the only points of union, but now that this was no longer so, Indians were converging towards modern politics.<sup>24</sup>

The Indian National Movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided the political background for the emergence of political parties in India and till the founding of the Indian National Congress (INC), there was no axis around which such an organization could revolve. Passing through three stages of development; first, as pressure group, then a national movement and finally a political party, there was a critical phase in which the congress was transformed from nationalist movement to a political party.<sup>25</sup> Indian National Congress thus emerged as a political party after a long history of agitation and after the transfer of power. In other words, the INC has been the prime instruction of the Indian anti-colonial struggle. Its history encompasses almost a century of endeavor to consolidate forces of national freedom. Gunnar Myrdal is of the view that 'Indian National Congress was by

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<sup>24</sup> Anil seal, '*The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*', Cambridge University Press, London, 1971, p. 194.

<sup>25</sup> Myron Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

then a fairly cohesive political machine, had a progressive socio-economic programme and was dominated by men of considerable integrity and national purpose.<sup>26</sup> Enjoying two full decades of domination in the post-independence India, the Congress was able to extend its base into almost every part of the country. Though its formal structure suggests a highly centralized or oligarchic model, it is often argued that the INC's pivotal position is being taken not to highlight its own role in the freedom movement, and two decades in the post independence period, but also in creating a basis for a multiparty system in the country. In fact, there has been a constant trend towards broadening the social base of the party. The congress Leadership was acutely aware of the need to develop and observe procedures, which would permit and ensure the democratic functioning of the party in itself and as a responsible element in the society at large.<sup>27</sup> The resulting diversity of congress leadership and party's ability to aggregate the demand of a highly differentiated base has been an indispensable source of congress strength.<sup>28</sup> Since its social base has been extended to almost every caste, religion and community, the Congress party, more than any other party, has considerable tolerance for divergent views and functions. This tolerance and intra-party diversity are what gave the congress party its national character.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, "*Asian Drama – An Enquiry into Poverty of Nations*", The Penguin Press, London, 1998, Vol. I, p. 261.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Kochanek, '*The Congress Party of India: The Dynamics of One Party Democracy*', Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1968, p. xx.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. xxv.

<sup>29</sup> Myron Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

In course of time, because of the increasing disarray within the party and lack of rapport, a new glacial relation between the government and the organization was created and finally it thus led to its split in 1969.

### **3. Decline of the Congress Party: The Emergence of Regional Political Parties**

In general, it is believed that the split of the Congress would be the purification of the Congress due to its return to power in the 1980s. But, “the party failed to remain as resilient as before, attracting and accommodating conflicting group and pulls”.<sup>30</sup> Thus, “the twenty years of one party dominance had come to an end, while the Indian political system adjusted to a shift from one party dominance to multi-partysm”.<sup>31</sup> Several other factors have also contributed to the congress reversal and one of the most important was unable to perform its traditional function of moderating and neutralizing factional splits within the party which, in turn, resulted in a near disintegration of the organization in many states. Pointing out the internal problems, Stanley Kochanek is of the view that “the post Nehru leadership failed to perform what had become the central leadership’s most vital function, the mediation of intra-party dispute and the division.”<sup>32</sup> Although the Congress split in 1969 provided an opportunity to the party to reshape its policies and strategies and the it shaded the old leadership and outdated principles, the political event marked the beginning of a

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<sup>30</sup> Ashoka Mehta, *A Decade of Indian Politics, 1966–1977*, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley Kochanek, *op.cit.*, p. 408.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 410.



transformation of the Indian political system from a dominant one party system to ‘multi-partism.’

Yet, despite the loss of its hegemony, the Congress remains the largest, the highly organized and the only all India party. Its success as a whole is solely not because of the charisma of Nehru or even to the magic tradition of the nationalist alone. It must be, according to Kochanek, attributed to the ability of the Congress to adapt to the conditions of governing and to the changes, which have been taking place in the Indian environment.<sup>33</sup>

No doubt, the 1967 elections have broken the ‘near monopoly’ of power enjoyed by the Congress for two Decades but the inevitable result was that Indian political system witnessed a greater variety of political participation and behavior. It was in this sense that the fourth General Elections were nothing but a manifestation of a political revolt that symbolized the growing assertion of the “regional allies” within the congress system. Thus, eventful sixties constituted the most defining decade in the realm of Indian politics – the decline of Congress and the emergence of non-Congress formation. Subsequently, a large vacuum, which was left behind by the Congress, was sought to be filled by the regional parties, apart from BJP, the Janata Dal and the Left. However, the inability of various parties to successfully fill the gap left by the departure of Congress has facilitated institutional decline. In fact, it was the election of 1984 that, for the last time “we had a clear majority of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 428.

Congress in the Lok Sabha, when Rajiv Gandhi got a massive mandate of 400 seats in a House of 556.<sup>34</sup> But, the present trend shows that no party is in a position to have a majority in parliament and thus form the government. Now, a majority government is formed with outside support or a coalition government.

In fine, it is difficult to have a one party government in a pluralistic country like India with so many diversities, with so much pull and pressure. Moreover, it was often said that, “the framework of Congress party as highly centralized and authority of the organizational machinery runs from top to bottom; but in the practical sense, it is not a cadre party with rigid discipline, but a loose organization having highly individualistic nature. This, in turn, resulted in building personality cult and the warring groups and cliques construed as little empire within the empire”.<sup>35</sup> As pointed out before, it may be recalled, “even from its very beginning the Congress was an omnibus. It was possible within it to accommodate different interest unified for the common national cause”.<sup>36</sup> But the post independence period witnessed the Congress image cracking as the diverse interests soon left the Congress and organized independent units. As a result, the Congress became a loose organization in most of the Indian states with a diverse outlook. Further, people gradually realized that stating their claims in the democratic process will lead to a truly participatory and the decentralized development. Thus, this led to the emergence of various social and

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<sup>34</sup> Subhas C. Kashyap (ed.), *Coalition Government and Parties in India*, Uppal, New Delhi, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> G. Gopalakumar, *The Congress Party and State Politics*, Deep & Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p.18.

political groupings mainly based on region, ethnic, caste and the community lines from within and outside the Congressmen.

Here, a few Indian political observers stated that “the horizontal and vertical growth of the party have been subjected to the changes in its composition and contents”.<sup>37</sup> Even though the Congress survived by retaining its identity because of its peculiar capacity to accommodate every section of the Indian society, the party found itself in a minority and out of power in a number of states after 1967.

The loss of Congress hegemony, thus, helped in the emergence of regional and local aspirations, and subsequently, different political parties entered the political arena. Since, no party gets the majority in this multi-party system, coalition government becomes the order of the day. Here, it can be rightly claimed that the decline of the Congress party gave way to multi-partism thus bringing the country into a coalition era. In this, the role of the state or regional parties is acknowledged and thereby giving federal character to the polity of country. Nikhil Chakravaty rightly comments that in the case of India “there is not a goast of a inescapable”.<sup>38</sup> With the coalition pattern, there have been a change in a national level due to the fact that there have taken place a growing regionalization of politics. This pattern has brought changes in the coalition politics of India. Thus, “the Indian coalition framework of

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Nikhil Chakravaty, “Coalition Politics and Impending Poll,” *Mainstream*, New Delhi, Vol. XXXV, No. 52, December 6, 1997, p. 3.

BJP and the dynastic framework of the Congress towards moderate position because of the new political compulsions of carrying various allies with them”.<sup>39</sup>

Emphasizing the importance of small or regional and state parties, Rajni Kothari has rightly remarked, “Coalition model was still operating but now as a moderating force than one in which large national parties were being forced to accept the need for alliances and accommodation with a variety of both old and new parties and individually. And above all that with regional parties whom they were earlier prone to brush aside”.<sup>40</sup> The states of the North- India, though isolated geographically from the rest of the country, are no exception when it comes to the coalition politics. The region has been experiencing coalition politics and government for long time. “Historically, coalition politics has the usual pattern of the various communities of North-East India”.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, in the light of coalition formation and the role of all India parties in the region, it becomes imperative to look into the nature and pattern of party alliances among the political units of North-East Region

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<sup>39</sup> Rajni Kothari, “Message in Ballots,” *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, March 15, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> B. Pakem, *Coalition Politics in North East India*, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 1999, p. 59.

## CHAPTER II

### NORTH EAST INDIA

#### 1. An Overview on its Socio- Economic and Political condition:

The North East region comprising seven states accounts for 7.5% of total land space of India and contains 6.89% of the total population of the country.<sup>1</sup> The population of hill dwellers in the North-Eastern Region is around 44 lakhs, which represents eleven percent of the total tribal population of the country.<sup>2</sup> The entire region is inhabited by not less than 180 groups of tribal population.<sup>3</sup> 'The importance of the North Western Frontier Province adjoining Afghanistan and the ever-expanding empire of Russia during the British times has now been eclipsed in Republican India by the importance of the North Eastern Frontier Areas',<sup>4</sup> observed Sunity Kumar Chatterjee in the early Fifties. In the words of S.K.Chaube, "the importance has become greater now with the emergence of seven political units in the region, all with international borders. The delicate neck of plains that connects north east India with the rest of the country is, between Nepal and Bangladesh, only about 12 miles wide, touching the two ends of a 2500 miles long international boundary and intersected by a number of turbulent rivers flowing from the Himalayas southward into Bangladesh."<sup>5</sup> The region is well known for its isolated geographical position and the backwardness.

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<sup>1</sup> . K.P.Ray, ' Power Development in the N.E. region', art in *Journal of N.E. Council*, Vol.12, no.2.p.1.

<sup>2</sup> N.E. Council Plans and Programme for Regional Development.1990. P-76.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Sunity Kumar Chatterjee, *The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*, Banikanta Lectures, Gauhati, 1955, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> S.K.Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973, (reprinted 1999),p.217.

Today, development schemes reach the North Eastern states quite late for their remoteness and inaccessibility. North Eastern India is now divided into as many as seven different states belonging to different ethnic groups, predominantly inhabited by the tribal peoples. The lack of basic human amenities in most of the villages and the lack of employment opportunities have been the main causes of exodus in North-East India leading to unhealthy and at times uneconomic overcrowding of the urban centers causing social tension. Besides its own social complexities, migration has also played a very important role in the demographic changes of the region with far reaching social, economic and political impacts.

The North-East Region has been affected by migration to a remarkable extent. Historically, the region has proved to be prone to migration of people. Therefore, a tribal mix was a natural outcome. Added to this were people from across the border under some pretext or the other. Yet, migration in recent time was accepted initially as convenient and the cheap labour. As a result, people who raised the “foreigner issue” should have acted then and not when they found the competition tough. One may also add that even without migration this is nothing new to this region; ‘throw out the Bengals’ or ‘liquidate the non-

tribals' or 'throw out the foreigner' (Indians not belonging to the region); have been heard before.<sup>6</sup>

The whole of the North East India is an agricultural land. There are no large-scale industries and barring the state of Assam no other states have any medium sized industries. Agriculture constitutes about 60 percent of the net domestic product and engages 70 percent of the total working population. However only 7.75 percent of the net cropped area is irrigated, mostly through indigenous means. Modern practices like multiple cropping, disease control, water management and fertilizer use have not gained currency.<sup>7</sup>

The region also presents the complexities of the sub Himalayan ranges the Indo-Burmese hill of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram and the eroded surfaces of the Meghalayan plateau, all encircling the Brahmaputra valley; the hills are sharply marked from the plains physically as well as culturally, though so linked locationally that to the same extent they must be treated together.<sup>8</sup>

The North-Eastern Frontier Region of India, the Ancient Pragytisa and Historical Kamrupa and the British province of Assam, comprising of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam,

<sup>6</sup>Trigeinesh Mukherjee, "Insurgency in the North East: Improving Awareness," in Ranju R. Dhamala & Sukalpa Bhattacharjee(ed.), 'Human Rights and Insurgency-The North East India,' Shirpa Publications, New Delhi, P. 56.

<sup>7</sup>"North East Region and Sinews of economic Growth," *The Assam Tribune*, January 2, 1977.

<sup>8</sup>Devendra Kumar Nayak, Sukla Chakravorty and Subratra Chakravorty, 'Pattern of Urbanization in the North East' in J.B. Ganguly(ed.), *Urbanization and Development in North East India—Trends and Policy Implication*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.2.

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Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, has a distinct identity. Topographically, the entire region as the encatchment area of the Brahmaputra river system is the part of the Eastern Himalayan Extension. Historically, it has strong links with the Gangetic plains, though its natural orientation was towards North to Tibet and East to the South East Asia. Ethnologically, Though there have been distinct Caucasoid and Austroid strains in the population, the main ethnic stream belongs to the larger Mongloid stock and their legends of ethnic migration link them to the North and the East.<sup>9</sup> 'North East India is a mosaic of diverse racial types, cultural forms, languages and dialects. Besides different traditions of origin...when this historical facts are mentioned, it is by no means suggested that the people of these areas are or can be less Indian'.<sup>10</sup> And, Nowhere in India, are there such a large number of tribes as in the North East India. And nowhere in the world is the composition of the population so diverse as this region.<sup>11</sup> These historical and cultural complexities of the northeastern states, with their tenuous economic and terrestrial links with the rest of the country have heightened the trends towards alienation. In fact, the region because of its geographical isolation and scant financial resources has accentuated the dependence on the centrally assisted development. Thus, special status, unique relationships to meet specific needs and non-uniformity, has been given top priority in the overarching requirements of cohesion in the states of the region. In a way, the feeling of 'Us' and 'They'

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<sup>9</sup> A.C. Sinha, *North Eastern Frontier of India—Structural Imperatives and Aspects of Change*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, p.13.

<sup>10</sup> B.K. Roy Burman, " *Issues in North East : An Appraisal*", in B.L. Abbi(ed.), *North East Region: Problem and Prospects of Development*, Chandhigarh, 1984, p.175.

<sup>11</sup> V.Venkata Rao, ' *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India (1874- 1974)*, S. Chand & Company, Delhi, 1976, p.15.



very much prevalent in the existing attitudes, has to change into a cooperative and systematic attitude where a delicate attempt has to be made to depart from 'divide' and 'rule' of British to 'unite' and 'serve'.<sup>12</sup>

The British did not directly administer the hill district of the region as they did in the case of the Brahmaputra valley. However, overall British control of the regional economy and inter-tribal relations led to the freezing of the tribal situation as if their natural process of growth was clipped off.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the states of North East differed in their historical origins and their political development, and therefore special provisions had to be made, such as the Part B (representing the former Indian states), the Part C states (representing the Centrally Administered areas) and some smaller Territories in Part D. "Historically, successive legal and administrative decision taken between 1874 and 1935 gave the areas of North East a distinct identity. The British administration initially treated the areas as "Non-Regulated Areas", then declared them as "Backward Tract" and lastly, "Excluded Areas" and "Partially Excluded Areas".<sup>14</sup>

However, since the Indian Independence, the step-motherly treatment meted out to the people of the North East is the only cause for the uprising in the region. The people have

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<sup>12</sup> K.Saigal, *Federal Democracy and Pluralism in the North East*, in B.Arora & Douglas V.Verney (ed.), *op. cit.* p.215.

<sup>13</sup> A.C.Sinha, *op. cit.* p.16.

<sup>14</sup> Gulshan Sachdeva, *Economy of the North East: Policy, Present Condition and Future Possibilities*, Konark, New Delhi, 2000, p.1.

a serious feeling that the Centre looks upon the North East with some amount of distrust<sup>15</sup>. The Indian Constitution, while the unitary bias of the original design was unmistakable, a remarkable degree of flexibility and pragmatism was also worked in. Balveer Arora is of the view that 'it recognized the virtue of asymmetry in bringing about and maintaining union, particularly when it came to the integration of states and people who had enjoyed considerable autonomy under the previous regime of Central (British) paramouncy.<sup>16</sup> The whole debate on special status is 'a basic asymmetry arising from the simultaneous operation of the federalizing process in two different directions, (a) provinces which were part of British India gained a federal existence through the decentralization process, as a unitary state rearranged itself into its ethno-linguistic components, and (b) states which were having a prior sovereign and quasi-sovereign existence which interpreted their accession as being a voluntary compact, accepted as much for geographical reasons as for the promised nature and scope of the association.'<sup>17</sup>

## **2. Rise of Regional Parties in North-East India:**

Institutions do not exist in a vacuum and therefore cannot be examined in isolation. They are always interfered with several other institutions, an interaction with which eventually determines their nature. In fact, it is not the institutions that so much affect the

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<sup>15</sup> Ch. Manihar, "*Souvenir*", '19<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day of the Manipur People's Party, 26, December- 1, January, 1987' Imphal, 1988, p.ii.

<sup>16</sup> Balveer Arora, '*Adapting Federalism to India: Multilevel and Asymmetrical Innovations*,' in Balveer Arora & Douglas V. Verney (ed.), *Multiple Identities in a single state: Indian Federalism in Perspective*, Konark, Delhi, 1995, pp. 71-72.

<sup>17</sup> Balveer Arora, *o.p. cit.* p. 80.

society, as it is the latter, which actually determines the real nature of the institutions by making them operate in its socio-cultural and political milieu. The growth and development of political parties are considered as an indispensable part of modern states.<sup>18</sup> Just as social identities influence the organizational form of political life, so do political organizations shape the forms of social identifications?<sup>19</sup>

In India, the organization becomes possible through mobilizations and it is through mobilization that some kind of a regional identity can also be constructed which is so essential to exert pressure on the Centre under a federal system. Thus, federal government is only a device by which the federal qualities of a society are articulated and protected.<sup>20</sup> This role is generally played by the regional parties, which provide these regional forces an opportunity to articulate their interests through the mechanism of their party apparatus.

With the ending of the Congress system, trends towards regionalisation of Indian politics have become more manifest; and states have become increasingly important and powerful units of the Indian political system. Because of the Congress domination in the states during the initial two decades after independence, erosion of federalism taken place thereby weakened the will of the state government for autonomy, which was the sole factor in the growth of predominance of the Centre. "The strains and imbalances in the federal

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<sup>18</sup> Kishalay Banerjee, *Regional Parties in India*, New Delhi, B.R. Publishing 1984, p. IX.

<sup>19</sup> Kishalay Banerjee *o.p. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> W.S. Livingston, *Federation and Constitutional Change*, 1956, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 2.

structure were due to the Congress Party's dominant position in the polity, particularly the Gandhi family, whose political need, the regional parties and their aspirations and participation."<sup>21</sup> It is rightly predicted that once this monopoly of the Congress is eroded, a balanced political atmosphere will prevail; the regional parties would be able to demand an appropriate distribution of federal powers.

Thus, with the process of politicization which gradually extended further through the 'massification' and 'grass-rootisation' of the electoral democracy, the regional pulls were inevitable in strengthening the regional feelings and in putting all kinds of pressures to force the central ruling leadership to succumb to their demands. It is this intense politicization of each and every small social diversity over the years that eventually made one party dominant model unworkable.

In the earlier period, regionalism in India was never about the struggle for better revenue distribution or efficient administration, or even about the share in the Rupee raised by way of taxation, but an assertion for 'home land', for 'self respect'; for cultural nationalism.<sup>22</sup> The rise of the regional parties coincided with the growing dissatisfaction with the Congress rule in many regions and absorb and which lowered the ability of the

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<sup>21</sup> Haris Khare, 'Regional Parties: Reduced Efficacy', in "Political Today", *Seminar* 399, November, 1992 p.p.33-35.

<sup>22</sup> Pradeep Kumar; *Indian Federation: Issues and challenges in the context of demands for New States* "in Kauseved Azam (ed) Federation and Good Governmence" New Delhi, South Asia, 1998, p. 36.

Congress to assimilate various small groups. But, according to Sudha Pai, it may also be due to the uneven or lopsided pattern of economic development in India since independence, in which some regions have experienced faster economic growth.<sup>23</sup> In a way, it is also believed that the regional pulls were so much in operation within the Congress in the 1960s like a federal organization whose state / regional units were at times behaving like the regional parties. However, the non-implementation of the official language Act and the three-language formula, the tardy implementation of land reforms in most states, the non-compliance of West Bengal and Bihar Government on the Damodar Valley Corporation Projects, the strong sentiments on the linguistic issues have contributed in creating a serious conflict between the Centre and the regional units of the Congress party itself.<sup>24</sup> 'The periodic election based on the Universal adult franchise has also ensured some kind of electoral socialism.'<sup>25</sup>

Now, the country had witnessed the rise and success of regional parties viz. the AIADMK, the AGP, etc. In the North Eastern Region, there have been a number of similar political formations, for instance the Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) in Nagaland, the Manipur People's Party (MPP) in Manipur, All People's Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) in Meghalaya, which are content to play

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<sup>23</sup> Sudha Pai, *Regional parties and Emerging Pattern of politics in India*; India Journal of Political science, Volume 51 no.3, July-September. 1990,p.391.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus Franda, *West-Bengal and the Federalizing process in India*; New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Pradeep Kumar, "Massification of Electoral democracy and Political fluidity." *'Mainstream'*, February 7,1998,p.19.

at bent a marginal role in the state level politics. After the attainment of freedom, people had had high hopes for fulfillment of their aspirations. But, even after so many years of independence, frustration and disappointment loom large in the face of a larger section of the people of this region. Besides, politics has become more participatory and representative than it had been before with the universalization of the franchise. The 'aggressive entry' of the Centre in the sphere of state's power has caused grave disappointment to the people. This has created instability in the states and people were disillusioned. The way in which Chief Ministers were reduced to the status of 'tenants at will' brought about a climate of change in the states which ultimately gave rise to regional parties.<sup>26</sup> In fact, these parties have born out of utter neglect by the Centre on the one hand and the people's strong desire to vindicate their rights and privileges as free men on the other hand. Thus, regional parties should not be taken otherwise but be conceived as a part of the political development through democratic process.

### **3. Manipur: A Political History**

The development of Manipur as a political entity was not a joy ride for the people of the region. Before the British conquest of the state in 1891, it was the under the monarchical system with the king as the head. History records Manipur as an independent princely state from 33 A.D.to 1949 having a rich and chequered tradition and culture. Once described as a

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<sup>26</sup> H.N.Bahughana; cited in Ng.Kumarjit Singh, *Emergence of Regional Parties*, Vol.1. North-East India, Imphal, published by MPP,1986,p.

“flower on the lofty heights” by R. Constantine, it is now one of the most violent states, next only to Kashmir.<sup>27</sup> Entangled in the multitudinous problems, the state has become a hot bed for insurgency and is torn by conflicts and ethnic fights. In the pre-British period, the people of Manipur were completely ignorant of their political and civil rights due to the lack of education and communication. Anglo Manipuri relations started during Shri Jai Singh’s reign as he realised that the only effective measure to check Burmese inroads into Manipur was by taking help from the British. Manipur’s conflict with her eastern neighbor Burma was endemic and, in 1762, the Manipur king invited the East India Company to join her war with Burma. In fact, Captain Verelst marched from Calcutta with three Companies of sepoy to provide the assistance of Manipur king. However, after camping in Cachar for sometime he returned. This seems to have been the first official contact between the Manipur Government and East India Company.<sup>28</sup> In 1819, Manipur lost her independence and was placed under the Burmese suzerainty for seven years. This period under the Burmese rule is popularly known as *Chahi-Taret Khuntakpa* (Seven Years Devastation). Through the *Treaty of Yandaboo* 1826, the Burmese were made to renounce their claim on Assam, Manipur and their surrounding territory. Thus, British assumed the title of North East India by virtue of this treaty, Whereas Assam was annexed, Manipur was not. The latter was made to surrender the *Kabaw valley* to Burma in 1833 as a measure of British friendly gesture to

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<sup>27</sup> S.K. Chaube, “Manipur prospects- Manipur assembly Elections”, *Frontline*, February 24, 1995, pp.42-43.

<sup>28</sup> S.K. Chaube, “Constitution and political Development of Manipur”, *North Eastern Affairs*, January-March 1973. p.41.

Burma and was given the task of controlling the western Naga areas.<sup>29</sup> This was the beginning of the sovereignty of the Manipur Monarchs. Thus, for the first time in 1851, the British recognized a Manipur raja formalizing subordinate status of Manipur.<sup>30</sup> It was in 1891 that it surrendered its independence to the British rulers that also in the most befitting and honorable manner.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Manipur entered into a new phase where the administration of state was under the close control of the British government. The whole administration of Manipur was taken over by the British and a form of administration known as “Native Rule” was established by a proclamation issued by Queen Victoria with Churhand as the Raja. Even though Manipur was ruled by a Prince, its administration was handed over to a Durbar consisting of eight members with the Maharaja as its president. It made a very drastic reduction in its status; Manipur was put on an entirely different footing.<sup>32</sup> The revival of the Lallup\* by the then political agent Lt.Colonel H.St. Maxwell in 1904 led to the outbreak of the violent agitation and demonstration in the town by thousands of women to protest against the order.<sup>33</sup> Practically, every Village in the valley, except the Imphal villages, which

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> M. Kumarjit Singh, “Emergence of Regional Parties”, *North East India*, Vol-I, published by Manipur People’s Party, Imphal, 1986,p, 16.

<sup>32</sup> R.K.Jhaljit, A, *A short History of Manipur*, O.K. Store, Imphal, 1965, p.296.

\* Lallup, a system of compulsory labour to the state served by all men between the ages of 17 to 60 years for 10 days out of every 40days. (See R. Brown, *Annual administration report of Manipur 1868-69*, Selection from the record of Government of India Foreign Dept. No-LXXVIII, p.37.)

<sup>33</sup> J. Shakespare, *Administration Report of the Political Agency, Manipur for the year 1904-1905*, Shillong, p.1.



were exempted from the system of compulsory labour by the Durbar a few years ago combined in a passive resistance against the system.<sup>34</sup>

The socio economic movements preceded and contributed the development of organized political movements in Manipur. In the 1930's with the struggle for freedom by the Indian National Congress against the British, the weakness of the administration and the pervasiveness of an unscrupulous section of the state officials made the people aware of their political rights and thus led to the growth of their political consciousness.<sup>35</sup> The formation of the Nihil Manipuri Mahashabha under the presidentship of Maharaja Churhand Singh in 1934 marked a turning point in the political history of Manipur, because the agitation for constitutional reforms emanated from the same platform.<sup>36</sup> Although the Mahashabha was initially a social organization, after the *Chinga Session* in 1938', it became the first political party of Manipur. The Mahashabha followed the ideology and policy of the Indian National Congress, but the programme were modified to suit local conditions.<sup>37</sup> By extending its network among the people, the Mahashabha tried to impress upon them the long-standing necessity of democratization of political power and state machinery. Thus, Nihil Manipuri Mahashabha had become the most important political organization in Manipur under the leadership of Irabot Singh.<sup>38</sup> This Mahashabha led the first women's

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<sup>34</sup>H.C. Higgins; *Administrative Report of Manipur State 1912-1913*, Calcutta, 1913, p.1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Bimal Dev and Dilip K.Lahiri, *Manipur Culture and Politics*, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1987.p.114.

<sup>37</sup>R.K. Jhaljit Singh, *op.cit.*, pp.301-2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

movement or agitation demanding the ban of rice exports from Manipur and to stop all rice mills in the state. Later, there emerged differences of opinion between the working committee of the Mahashabha and the leader of the movement. Hijam Irabot Singh joined the Praja Sammelini as president to lead the movement.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the Mahashabha in due course of time with their inclination to the ideology and policy of the Indian National Congress developed to be the Congress party in 1946.<sup>40</sup> At a time when the Independence Act was about to be implemented, the British Government formulated special provisions for the native states for the transitional period between the transfer of power and the finalization of the constitution of free India. A standstill agreement was brought out which most states, with exceptions of a few signed. The Maharajah of Manipur, Maharaja Bodhachandra Singh also entered into such an agreement on the July 2, 1947. And on August 11, 1947, he signed the instrument of accession and accordingly, Manipur conceded power to the Indian Dominion three subjects, namely Foreign Affairs, Defence and communications. In all other subjects, she enjoyed full autonomy. Analogous to the interim government at the Center, Interim Government was also constituted at the state level on August 14, 1947.<sup>41</sup> On the August 15, 1947 with the attainment of India's Independence, the paramountcy of the British crown over the native states also came to an end. With the departure of the British, the durbar ceased to exist and the Maharaja convened Interim Council consisting of four officials, one representative of the Maharaja and five official representations of the Hill and

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<sup>39</sup> Th. Biren Singh, *Comrade Irabot*, CPI Office, Imphal, 1974, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p.11.

<sup>41</sup> R.K. Maipaksana, "Constitutional Development of Manipur", *Manipur Today*, Vol- XI, No-3, 1991. Imphal, p. 20.

the Valley. The council drafted the Manipur states (Constitution Act, 1947 and the Manipur state Hills peoples Administration) Regulation, 1947. Towards the end of 1948, Manipur became a constitutional monarchy with a legislative Assembly consisting of 53 members including 18 hill men.<sup>42</sup> However, the Maharaja was the ultimate authority in all-important matters and the council merely helped and advised him. They gave an idea on how the state was to be governed on constitutional lines. In fact, it was a great credit to this committee that they could, in such a short time, bring out an agreed Constitution of Manipur and her people will owe to them a great debt.<sup>43</sup>

However, the constitutional monarchy established under the Manipur constitution Act, 1947 did not last long with the efforts made by New Delhi to integrate all the native states in order to counter a move for balkanization of the country. Under this scheme, the merger agreement drive was brought out of which was to be entered into with the rulers including the Manipur Raja. The Manipuri king was one of the few rulers who refused to sign the agreement but later he was reportedly coaxed and compelled to sign on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1949 following which he ceded to the Dominion Government all his administrative powers.<sup>44</sup> On September 21, 1949 an agreement was reached for merging the state of Manipur with the dominion of India between the Maharaja and V.P.Menon, Adviser to the Govt. of India in Ministry of state on behalf and with the authority of Governor

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<sup>42</sup> S.K.Chaube *op.cit.*, p.42. (North East Affair).

<sup>43</sup> *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, Government of Manipur, 1946-47, p.2.

<sup>44</sup> Chingakham Shachikumar, *Center State Relation: A Case Study of Manipur*, Dissertation submitted to University of Delhi, 1995, p.54.

general of India, with Shri Prakasa, the then Governor of Assam, as witness.<sup>45</sup> The signing of Merger Agreement endorsed the formal merger of Manipur to the Dominion of India on 15 October 1947 and this day marked an important day in the history of Manipur, as its administration was taken over by the Government of India on that very day. The Manipur state Congress has been demanding the abdication of the Maharaja and immediate merger of the state with the center.<sup>46</sup> However, the popular sentiment in Manipur has been such that the Maharaja was forced to sign the Merger Agreement in Shillong. The Maharaja and his brother Captain Joy Singh of Assam Rifles with the help of other MLAs and Ministry made an all out effort to highlight the evil effects of integration and the tribal chiefs were told that the loss of privileges along with abolition of chieftainship would be the inevitable consequences of integration.<sup>47</sup> In fact, “the transfer and the abdication of the state to the Dominion Government had created a deep scar in Manipur politics and the surrender by the Maharaja had also many to weep.”<sup>48</sup> According to Nari Rustomji, advisor to the Governor of Assam in 1950, the then Maharaja of Manipur tried to adhere to the status quo when the question of merger of his states with the Dominion of Indian came up.<sup>49</sup> “In the year 1950 when the Governor of Assam, Sri Prakasa and his advisor met Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, the first Home Minister of Independent India, they explained the difficulties regarding the merger of Manipur. Patel in turn asked if there was no Brigadier of the Indian Army

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<sup>45</sup> *The Manipur*, Part-I, Government of Manipur (Law Dept.), Imphal, 1963, pp.265-67.

<sup>46</sup> Bimal S. Dev. And Dilip K.Lahiri, *op.cit.*, p.125.

<sup>47</sup> Bimal S.Dev. & Dilip Kumar Lahiri *op.cit.*, p.126.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* .p.127.

<sup>49</sup> Nari Rustomji, *Enchanted Frontier*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 19732,p.107.

there.”<sup>50</sup> The manner in which Manipur was merged with India later became one of the main planks for the insurgency movement in the valley of the state.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the manner in which the state of Manipur was included in the Indian Union, whereby it was given only a peripheral status added to a feeling of alienation of these people from the country of which they were being made a part.<sup>52</sup> With the coming into force of the Constitution of India, Manipur became a ‘Part C’ state on 26 January 1950. Thus, Manipur was virtually governed by the non-elected Chief Commissioner, the Council of Minister being merely advisors to him. Similar administrative set ups continued even after the state Reorganisation Act, 1956 when Manipur became a Union Territory.<sup>53</sup> During the Part ‘C’ state status in 1952, the first General Election on the basis of adult franchise was held for the election of two members of Lok Sabha (one each from the hills and the valley) and 30 members of Electoral College. These members recommended the names of five advisors for the Advisory Council of the Chief Commissioner but have no executive powers except giving advice to the Chief Commissioner in matters of administration. It was only after the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 that Manipur was granted statehood on January 21, 1972, with a responsible government. Thus, the attainment of statehood was not offered in a gold platter as it was only after a series of demands in the form of hartals, satyagrah, that the attitude of the Centre towards the states actually changed.

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<sup>50</sup> N.Vjayalakshmi Brara, *op.cit*, p.239

<sup>51</sup> Nari Rustomji, *op.cit*. p.109.

<sup>52</sup> N.Vijayalakshmi Brara, *op.cit*, p.240.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

### 3.1. Manipur People's Party and Other Political Parties

The nature of the cleavages or contradictions in a given society and the general level of its economic development largely influence the type of party system that would prevail in that society. A party system is essentially a by-product of the social system. In a society where the social composition such as ethnic, religion, culture etc. is highly variable, the survival of regional or smaller political parties is very difficult. The Manipur People's Party was born out of extreme necessity to safeguard the ethnic identity of the people, to protect their territorial integrity, and to check the economic decadence in the region. One of the most important objectives of the party was to promote the regional interest in general.<sup>54</sup> The main reason for the formation MPP was to safeguard and uphold the common interest of the people and for the socio-economic advancement of the state. Like any other regional party, MPP was also an offshoot of the defectors from the Indian National Congress.

The party was formed on December 26, 1968, at a meeting convened by Shri Chaoyaima Singh, Shri Nilachandra, Y. Yaima Singh and S. Tombi Singh.<sup>55</sup> According to the Constitution of the party, "it is a voluntary organization of the people who live in Manipur and who espouses the cause of Manipur. The goal of the party is to establish by

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<sup>54</sup> Ng. Kumarjit, *op.cit.* p.36

<sup>55</sup> Ksh. Bimola Devi, *Political Development & Integration of Manipur-1950- 1977, M.Phil. Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1978, p.45.*

democratic and peaceful means that will bring an advancement of the people of Manipur and to establish an egalitarian society based on democratic socialism.”<sup>56</sup>

In the early seventies, MPP seemed to attract many students and members of the younger generations. Thus, the party was supported by the combination of by the cross-sections of the society. Even the congress, which was considered as the largest single party in the state, had few members in the hills and they too were nearly all social workers.<sup>57[55]</sup> However, it is believed that peasants and agriculturalists do not support the same party of the state nor do the businessmen the urban middle class or workers. So, the social base of the parties is subject to wide fluctuations and no political party can claim to have a clearly defined social support base, valid for all parts and sections of the state. According to S.K.Chaube, ‘the non-Manipuri businessmen and traders viewed the MPP as anti- outsiders rapidly pro Manipuri party biased against the non-Manipuri sections of the elite’.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the party strongly emphasizes its regional character claiming that it alone could bring prosperity to the Manipuris. Focusing on the various issues from time to time, the party tried to highlight certain problems both in the society and polity. But, the party could not fought the battle of ballots under the banner of a pre-poll alliance called the secular Democratic Front

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<sup>56</sup> *The Constitution of Manipur People's Party*, Imphal, 1984, p.1

<sup>57</sup> Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, *Constitution 1975-76*, Imphal, Manipur.

<sup>58</sup> S.K.Chaube, *Electoral Politics in North East India*, University Press (India), Delhi, 1985, p.131.

(SDF) together with CPI, Janata Dal (S) and its traditional rival, India National Congress, in a bid to defeat the ruling Manipur state Congress Party (MSCP).<sup>59</sup>

However, the party justified its existence by the works done during the short period, the Party could feel round of its achievement while it was at the echelon of affairs of the state. Of the works done by the Party, the followings can be mentioned: in the field of education, a branch of Jawaharlal Nehru University(JNU) which was established, the Regional Medical College (RMC), was started in 1972-73. As a part of the policy for industrialization of the state, stress was given on starting some large-scale industries. In pursuance of this policy, the first spinning mill was started at Loitang Khunou village. Another achievement of historical importance was the laying foundation stone of War Memorial at Khongjom where the last battle for freedom was fought against formidable odds. It was argued that MPP did much works than the Congress government did in the last thirty-seven years.<sup>60</sup>

By utilizing the fractured verdict, the party was thus able to form a coalition government with non-Congress parties and the Independents. A ministry headed by Md. Alimuddin under the name of United Legislative Party was installed on March 20, 1972. Thus, this election brought into existence the era of coalition government in the state. However due to dissensions cropped up within the ULP and followed by defection of MPP

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<sup>59</sup> Venkata Rao, *op.cit.* p. 269.

<sup>60</sup> Ng. Kumarjit, *op.cit.*, p.p. 38-40.



members, a no confidence motion was moved against the Government by the Progressive Democratic Alliance of the Congress, CPI and the progressive Independent Group on March 23 and on March 26, 1973 Alimuddin submitted his resignation. 'Subsequently, the Assembly was adjourned *sine die* by the Speaker, the same day. On March 28 1973, President rule was imposed in Manipur and state Assembly was dissolved'.<sup>61</sup> Since 1972, the political trends of the state have shown that no party has secured an absolute majority. Therefore, the coalition politics has been the way of political life in the state. In a state with cultural and religious differences among the ethnic communities, the number of smaller political groups like MHU, Socialist Party, KNA, etc, has also been increased from time to time. Beside personal ambitions, politicians in Manipur change their party loyalty frequently, thereby creating political instability in the state.

#### **4. Meghalaya: A Note on its Political History**

The state of Meghalaya is situated between latitude 25 degree 02' and 26 degree 06' North and longitudes 89 degree 50' and 92 degree 50' East, with a total geographical area of 22.5 thousand square kilometers. Its boundaries are demarcated by the Golpara and the Kamrup districts of Assam in the North, the South-Western part of the district of Golpara and a part of Rangpur district (Bangladesh) in the West, the Mymensingh and Sylhet district of Bangladesh in the South and the North Cachar and the Karbi Anglong district of Assam

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<sup>61</sup> 'Administrative Report-1972-73' *Government of Manipur*, p.3.

in the East. The state is predominantly inhabited by three tribes, the Garos in the West, the Jaintia in the East and the Khasis in the Central area. The state is linguistically heterogeneous: for all of its 27 communities, it has fifteen languages. The Khasi which belongs to the Austro- Asiatic family of languages is spoken by the largest number of communities. "In the nineteenth century, the people of these hill tribes were caught in the vortex of the mighty political and administrative changes. Many new administrative set ups were brought into existence, new administrative machinery was introduced, and large tracts of territories were taken away by the British."<sup>62</sup> The Garos were the first among the mountain tribes to have been affected by these changes. In 1824 after a successful military operation from Mymensingh, David Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam was of the view that it is advisable to bring into existence a new institution to overshadow the traditional institution of Nokmanship and the traditional councils. Therefore, by founding the institution of Laskars, the British were determined to stop any further raids of the Garos, to put a stop to the practice of 'headhunting' and to bring about a homogenous administration in the Garo's territory directly under the complete direction and control of the British Government.<sup>63</sup> Besides, the coming of the British also resulted in many political and administrative changes in the hilly regions of the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills. The history of the Anglo- Khasi relations is one of the most fascinating chapter in the modern Indian history. It must be recalled that the aim of the British in establishing their authority in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were three fold. First, they wanted to have a free passage through the

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<sup>62</sup> R.S Lyngdoh, *Government and Politics in Meghalaya*, Sanchar Publishing, New Delhi, 1996, p.36.

<sup>63</sup> R.S. Lyngdoh, op.cit. pp. 37-38.

hills to connect the Assam Valley with the Surma Valley. Secondly, they wanted to regulate trade relationship with the hills. Thirdly, they were bent upon establishing Sanatoria and a military cantonment in the hill's midway between the two valleys.<sup>64</sup>

The earliest description of British rule on the North Eastern hills of India is also believed to be found in a report of A.J.M. Mills on the Khasi Hills (1853). According to him, "(The Khasis) from an association with civilization and wealth have become arrogant, deceitful and untrustworthy; but however their moral character may have deteriorated, the advantages they have derived and are deriving from their connection with our Government is great, and numerous civil wars, which continuously distracted the country have been put down. Their trade has been augmented. There is an increasing demand for their produces, and there is a striking improvement in the condition of the people, to say nothing of the benefits which they have derived from the attempt, feeble though it has been, to diffuse amongst them the advantages of education. We have also reaped the benefits of our position in having obtained an entire cessation of the murderous inroads, which these mountaineers constantly made into the plains."<sup>65</sup>

The British relationship with the Khasis took a new turn after a treaty concluded between David Scott on behalf of the East India Company and Tirot Singh on behalf of the Durbar Hima of the state of Nongkhlaw. Thus, Tirot Singh was required to become a British

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<sup>64</sup> R.S. Lyngdoh, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> See A.J.M Mills, *Report of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills*, 1853.

protégé and to give free passage to the British troops. In return, the British extended to Tirot Singh their full support, in case, if Nongkhlaw state was attacked by 'any foreign enemies.'

The present state of Meghalaya was first carved out of the composite state of Assam as autonomous state, vide Act. No. 55 of 1969 passed on 24 December, 1969 by the two houses of the Parliament and consequently in 1972 it emerged as a full-fledged state. Thus, the area of present day, Meghalaya was a part of Assam and it was only in 1969 that the Assam Re- organization ( Meghalaya) Act was passed in the Parliament and created the autonomous state of Meghalaya within Assam and it was upgraded into a full fledged state, with a Assembly of its own under the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.<sup>66</sup> The state was born as a result of a long drawn struggle for a separate area of operation for the tribes of north east. The first voice in this regard was raised by the Khasi-Jaintia Political Association (1946) which demanded the creation of a federation of khasi states' seconded by the Hills Union (1946) demanding a separate hill state and the Garo National Conference (1946) asking for 'a district administration with full political autonomy.'

Meghalaya is the only state in India where the people follow the matrilineal system. For generations, Khasi and Garo women have been the custodians of property in whose strength of life and character the men of their clans confide their hopes and aspirations. However, the art of government and politics had been the monopoly of men. In fact, there

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<sup>66</sup> B.P. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp.97-98.

was a clear demarcation of roles between men and women. Both the Garo and Khasi political system are based on clanship and inter- clan relationship. But, while the Garo political system is simple, it is more authoritarian than that of the Khasis which is more mature and democratic.

Over the years, the state has been experiencing the coalition politics as result of the shifting loyalty among the political leaders. It may also be noted that since the demographic condition of the state is varied in different ethnic and tribal population, the electoral success by a particular political party tended to be difficult. Therefore, it is not surprising when one witnesses coalitional politics in the state. But, more important is to understand the nature of political development shaped by the coalitional politics.

#### **4.1 Political Parties in Meghalaya:**

##### **A Historical Development of All Hill Party Leader's Conference and Other Political Parties**

In Meghalaya, the level of political consciousness of the local people is very weak and the parties did little in educating them politically and tried only to capitalize on their 'backward' 'traditional' feeling and 'parochial' sentiments rather than inculcating an enlightened democratic understanding. Under compelling circumstances, the All People's Hill Legislature Council (APHLC) was born to oppose the decision of Assam Pradesh Congress committee to the chief minister of Assam to take immediate steps for making

Assamese the state language. Since Assam at the time was a composite state including different hill tribes and sub-tribe, such decisions were interpreted by the hill people as a suppression of the minority language. Thus, 'the immediate reaction to this decision was the meeting of the All Assam Hills Leaders' Conference at Tura on April 28, 1960 under the chairmanship of Rev. B.M.Pugh.'<sup>67</sup> Opposing the steps taken by the Chief Minister to make Assamese the Official Language of the State, Capt. W.A. Sangma again convened a meeting of the leaders of all the political parties and leaders of different shades of public opinion in the Autonomous Hill Districts at Shillong on July 6, 1960. All political parties were represented from all the Autonomous Hill Districts except the Naga Hill. Finally, on July 7, 1960, the conference decided to constitute itself into a single political entity to be known as 'the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference. Thus came into existence the APHLC, which was destined to play a vital role in the formation of Meghalaya.<sup>68</sup> In course of time, some political parties like the Eastern India Union and the Khasi- Jaintia Federal State Conference merged completely with the APHLC. At the initial stage of the APHLC, the main purpose of party formation was to oppose the introduction of the Assam Official Language Bill. But it was at the Third Conference held at Haflong that the party demanded the formation of a separate Hill State. Gradually, the local leadership of the APHLC passed under the control of the leaders who had earlier been connected with Nicholas Roy.<sup>69</sup> Fighting for eight long years, the party consistently demanded a separate state and ultimately succeeded in its aim.

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<sup>67</sup> R. S. Lyngdoh, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> S.K. Chaube, 'Recent Trends in Khasi Politics', *North Eastern Affairs*, Shillong, July- September 1972, p.19.

The programme of the APHLC was realistic and not revolutionary. In 1962, the election manifesto promised the people of the Hill areas that it would make every effort for the establishment of a separate university for the Hill areas; that English would be the medium of instruction in schools and colleges; that the Districts Councils would be continued; that it develop the economic condition of the Hill areas; that the peoples' standard of life would be raised; and that it would protect the interest of the minority communities living in the Hill areas.<sup>70</sup> On 24 December 1969, parliamentt created history by passing the Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Bill<sup>71</sup> simultaneously in the two Houses in order to create 'an Autonomous state to be known as 'Meghalaya' within the state of Assam' comprising the United Khasi- Jaintia Hills Districts and the Garo Hill District as defined in the Sixth Schedule. When the majority of the APHLC accepted this status, a section of the party came out of it and formed a new party called 'Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party with the aim of continuing the struggle for full-fledged separate state.<sup>72</sup> In Meghalaya, the level of political consciousness of the local people was very weak and all the parties did precious little in educating them politically and tried only to capitalize on their backward traditional feelings and parochial sentiments rather than inculcating an enlightened democratic understanding. It is a paradox that even after a decade of achievement of the separate Hill

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<sup>70</sup> R.S.Lyngdoh, *op.cit.* p. 482.

<sup>71</sup> The Constitution of India Act. No. of 1969, vide *The Gazzette of India*, Extraordinary Part II, Section II.

<sup>72</sup> P.C.Biswas, '*Electoral Politics in North East India: with special reference to Meghalaya*,' in P.S.Dutta (ed.), *Electoral Politics in North East India*, Onsons Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p.76.

state, the APHLC and HSPDP continued to exist as loose platform rather than full-blown political parties paving the way for the Congress to become stronger in the state's politics.

Even though the aim and aspiration of the two parties are believed to be the same, the political conflicts between them have created many a time the political instability in the state. In fact, the emergence of the Hill State People's Democratic Party as another political force has marked historic political events in the states' politics. The party laid more emphasis on bringing back to Meghalaya all territories, which formerly belonged either to the Khasi Hills or Jaintia Hills. The party stood for the development of small and cottage industries, self-sufficiency and utilization of the mineral resources of the state through setting up of industries for the benefit of the tribal but in the manner not affecting their security and identity.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Soumen Sen, 'Election Manifestoes of Parties in Meghalaya- Some Preliminary Observation', in P.S. Dutta, *op. cit.*, p.p. 100-105.



## CHAPTER – III

### Political Trends in North East India

#### 1. Electoral Politics in India's North East Region

The relationship between a democratic polity and periodical election is intimate. Elections serve not merely as a mechanism of ensuring democracy continuity but also as an instrument of change. Besides, it is one of the most appropriate means of recording popular verdict on the performance of government and thus can legitimize the political process. Even more importantly, the periodic election can prompt and facilitate the development of intermediate political structure to articulate public policy, mobilize public opinion and enhance political participation.<sup>1</sup> On the hand, elections involve contestations of power and the people's aspiration of being a part of the mechanism of representation. Thus, The requirement that the entire adult population should participate in the election of rulers has an important bearing on how political power is structured at a particular moment in the history of democratic society. This means the enmeshing of the political process with numerous interest -individual, groups, sectional that are heterogeneous and not frequently compatible.<sup>2</sup> With a shift in the articulation of interest and a change in the perception of the relation between the advancement of certain interest and orientation of the ruling group towards the

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<sup>1</sup> Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1970, p.79.

<sup>2</sup> Ramashray Roy, *The Uncertain Verdict*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972, p. 1.

interests, the electoral outcome may bring about a complete change in the composition of the ruling elite with implication for future governmental policies and programmes.<sup>3</sup>

In India, elections are that single event when the benign world of democratic political theory melts away into the real world in which both individual and interest come into conflict.<sup>4</sup> It has also been pointed out that 'elections have acquired a political salience in democratic politics in the country. Therefore, all the political aspirations, demands and competing claims to power, must be mediated by elections. It is, therefore, one of the few reliable indicators to read public opinion and to measure the changes in the large environs of politics.'<sup>5</sup> As a necessary consequence of the accommodation and incorporation of the rising economic interest in the political process, according to Rajni Kothari, two simultaneous came in to operation: dispersal of power and integration of diverse socio- economic interest into the main stream of national political life.<sup>6</sup> The variation in the political strength of the political parties. therefore, is an index of the varying temperature characterizing the political atmosphere.

The North East India where the political situation was always characterized by what may be called according to S.K.Chaube, 'agitational politics', has a different dimensions of electoral politics. The organization of the North East India was the product of this

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 'The problem', *Seminar* 440, April, 1990, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Yogendra Yadav, 'Reconfiguration in the Indian Politics: State Assembly Elections- 1993 – 1995', in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *op. cit.* p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> Rajni Kothari, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

'agitational politics' developing through changing patterns of 'solidarity' and 'differentiation'.<sup>7</sup> He further defines electoral politics as politics of bargain and consensus and agitational politics as the combination of bargain and consensus. Thus, according to him, 'elections and electoral politics have occasionally contributed to the growth of violence in the North East India.'<sup>8</sup>

However, elections are one good occasion to reflect the state of public opinion and to justify the performance of every political party in a society. After all, there are no other normal political events as extensive as the elections to understand the political system of a society. Therefore, within democratic principles, the North East Region has been regularly holding elections and has also seen changes in the ruling parties. But the way how election result really reflect the majority has become an important point to be grasped, particularly in the states of Manipur and Meghalaya. Because, these two states have been experiencing most threatening political process of instability since their inception, there is a pressing need of a proper diagnosis of the 'disease'. In fact, the repercussion of this can be seen in almost all spheres- economic, social, law and order and center- state relations leading often to a violent public domain in the region.

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<sup>7</sup> S.K. Chaube, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Electoral History of Manipur

The whole Manipur at its inception as a state was divided into sixty single member constituencies, forty in the valley and twenty in the hill areas. The general election to the legislative Assembly was held for the first time in 1972 after the conferment of statehood to Manipur. In the politics of the state with exception of Indian National Congress, other national parties had had only a limited following. They are national only in so far as they are branches of respective national parties.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the trend of elections in Manipur has been in favour of the Congress. On the other hand, MPP, a strong regional political party, was also a favourable contender, acknowledged by the local people their significant role in the achievement of statehood, to this election. The electoral scene was naturally contentious, as it was being the first one after getting the status of state. Prior to the election, the Congress also proclaimed that 'the conferment of statehood to Manipur is a glorious achievement of the party', and thus expected an absolute majority in the election. Even though the Manipur People's Party was believed to be the strongest regional force in the state, its base in the hill areas seemed to be very weak. As seen in Table. 1, the party had only 5 contestants in the hill constituencies, while the Congress filled up all the constituencies, from this, it may be noted that the Congress party had good network in this election.

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<sup>9</sup> L. P. Sinha, 'The Politics and Government of Manipur', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No.4, Oct.- Dec., 1987, p.491.

**Table: 1**

**The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election, 1972 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur:**

Political Parties	Seats won in valley const.	Seats contested in valley const.	Seats won in Hill const.	Seats contested in Hill const.	Total Seats won.
INC	10	40	7	20	17
MPP	15	37	0	5	15
CPI	5	25	0	0	5
SOC	3	14	0	1	3
NCO	1	10	0	0	1
Independents	6	41	13	49	19

Source: N.B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3: the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.

However, when the electoral results were declared, the Congress won only 17seats. On the other side, MPP, which contested for the first time, also captured 15 out of the 42 seats it contested. After the election, MPP by utilizing the fracture verdict, formed a coalition government with the help of Socialist Party, Congress (O) and the Independents under the name of United Legislature Party (ULP) on March 20,1972.

In 1974, the Mid-term General Elections were held after the decline of the popular government due to the political uncertainty in the state. In this election, the Congress entered into electoral alliance with the Communist Party of Manipur (CPI) in order to check the rising tide of the regional parties, particularly the Manipur People's Party. The display of 'money power' by a number of independent candidates and supporters of the regionalist forces adversely affected the political fortune of the Congress.

**Table: 2**  
**The Party-wise Electoral Performance in the Mid-Term Assembly Election (1974) in Manipur**

Political Parties	Seats Won in Valley const.	Seats Contested in Valley const.	Seats won in Hill const.	Seats contested in Hill const.	Total Seats won
MPP	20	40	0	0	20
MHU	0	0	13	16	13
INC	8	30	4	19	12
CPI	6	11	0	0	6
SOC	2	16	0	1	2
KNA	0	0	2	6	2
Ind.	4	55	1	36	5

Source: N.B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.

After the election, the MPP held the dominant position winning 20 seats and the Congress reduced to only 12 seats. One remarkable feature of this election was the emergence of another regional party: the Manipur Hills Union (MHU) which contested for the first time and had a great success by getting 13 out of 16 seats it put up in the fray. This indicated that the ethnic politics started rooting in the state and valley-hill politics was also clearly in this election. Since no party was able to secure an absolute majority in the Assembly, 'political instability' continued to plague the politics of the Manipur.

The general election of 1980 in Manipur was an exception comparison to the rest of the states in India as far as the dominant position of the Congress was concerned. In this election, the party could secure only 13 seats when the MPP also secured only 4 seats and the JNP ended with 10 seats.

**Table: 3.**

**The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election, 1980 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur:**

Political Parties	Seats won in Valley const.	Seats contested in Valley const.	Seats won in Hill const.	Seats contested in Hill Const.	Total Seats won.
INC(I)	6	30	7	18	13
JNP	8	28	2	15	10
CPI	5	17	0	1	5
INC(U)	5	18	1	7	6
MPP	4	27	0	2	4
KNA	0	0	1	6	1
CPM	1	2	0	0	1
Independent	11	94	9	51	20

Source: N.B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952-1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.

One of the most striking picture of this election result was the position of the Independent candidates. They managed to get 20seats. This shows the overall decline of the political parties in the state. Therefore, the political process of Manipur is centered on 'personalities', seems to be put to test in this election. However, after the election, majority of the Independent candidates joined the Congress party, which was also the dominant position in the center. Thus, the 'politics of convenience' guided the behaviour of the political parties in the state. Above all, it may also be noted that due to the coming of Janata Dal at the Centre in 1977, the party has started establishing its base in the state.

In Manipur for the first time, General Election to legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha were held simultaneously on December 27, 1984.<sup>10</sup> Because of the disturbing situation within the state, the general election had to be conducted in a tactful manner under elaborate security arrangements with the active co-operation of the different central and state government agencies as well as political parties. By and large, the poll and electioneering, however, were completed peacefully, except for a few sporadic incidents of violence.<sup>11</sup> Beside a major chunk of Independent candidates, the assembly election of the 1984 was keenly contested between the national party and regional parties. However, in the hill constituencies of Karong, Mao, Kangpokpi, Tipaimukh, Thanlon and Shinghat, only Congress party and the Independent candidates nominated to contest the election.

**Table: 4.**  
**The Party wise Electoral Performance in the General Election of 1984 to the State Legislative Assembly of Manipur:**

Political Parties	Seats won in valley const.	Seats contested in valley const.	Seats won in Hill const.	Seats contested in Hill const.	Total Seats won.
INC	21	39	9	19	30
JNP	4	15	0	0	4
MPP	2	24	1	6	3
CPI	1	15	0	0	1
KNA	0	0	1	3	1
Independent	12	111	9	74	21

Source: N.B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> *Report on General Elections 1984*, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur, February, 1985,

p.1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



At the end, the Congress thus made an impressive come back by securing 30 seats. But, the main and one of the most popular regional party, the MPP, could manage to win only three seats out of its 34 candidates. This time also, the Independent candidates won 21 seats. 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 outcome in Manipur.

In 1990, elections were held in fifty-eight of the sixty Assembly constituencies on 12 February. In this election, the ruling Congress (I) was strongly challenged by the MPP and a host of the national parties. It had its immediate impact on the faction-ridden politics of Manipur. One significant feature, which may be crucially noted in this election, was that the formation of the National Front government at the Centre had its fallout in the politics of the state.<sup>12</sup> Strategically, six anti-Congress parties, including JD, CPI, Congress(S), CPM and KNA under the lead of MPP, forged an alliance thus putting up a joint fight against the Congress. But, the BJP was left out of this alliance.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, January 9, 1990.

**Table: 5**  
**Party-wise Performance in the 5<sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 1990.**

Political Parties	Total Seats Contested	Total Seats Elected
INC	60	26
JD	51	11
MPP	47	11
ICS	36	06
CPI	14	03
KNA	08	02
NPP	05	01

**Source:** Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly (Manipur), 1990, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

The outcome of the elections came as a morale booster for non- Congress combine and individual parties.<sup>13</sup> It showed the decrease in the Congress's share of seats with only 26 of 60 contested and a tremendous increase of MPP to 11 from 3 in the last election held. In fact, the trend of the previous result reversed and the Congress which bagged 23 of the 46 seats declared earlier, could managed to get only three of the 12 seats where the re-poll<sup>14</sup> was held. However, both the Congress and the ULF, formed by the non- Congress parties, stake their claims to form the government.

<sup>13</sup> *Patriot*, New Delhi, February 23, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

The Assembly election was held in two phases on 16 and 19 February, 1995 for hill and valley constituencies respectively.

**Table: 6**  
**Party-wise Performance in the 6<sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 1995.**

Political Parties	Total Seats Contested	Total Seats elected
INC	60	22
MPP	55	18
JD(U)	40	07
NPP	05	02
CPI	23	02
FPM	22	02
SMT	23	02
BJP	20	01
ICS	13	01
Independents	67	03

Source: Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly (Manipur), 1995, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

When the final result came out, no party could secure an absolute majority. But, the ruling Congress Party emerged as the single largest party with 22 seats. When the hectic process of government falls, the MPP, which secured 18 seats formed United Legislature Front (ULF) with JD-7, CPI-2, Samata Party-2, NNP-2 and the Congress (S)-1 and claimed to form the government. The increasing tally of MPP seats in this electoral result may be because of its active role during the mass movement for the inclusion of Manipuri Language in the Eight Schedule of Indian Constitution in early 1990s. However, the Congress, showing the traditional political skill, could manage to lure as many as eleven legislators and finally formed the ministry headed by Rishang Keishjing.

Of late, Manipur has become unquestionably important for the survival of political parties, both in terms of the legitimacy which public office confers, as well as in terms of the resources and capacities, which are, either offered or regulated, by the state.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the emerging power of the MSCP in 1997, may be relatively taken to this discourse. Though the party was the product of leadership dispute within the Congress party, there is a need of such a political 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 preminent. Thus, such a political consensus reflected its propagation in the state with the fall of another election in February 2000.

**Table: 7**  
**Party-wise Performance in the 7<sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative Elections, 2000.**

Political Parties	Total Seats Contested	Seats Elected From Valley Const.	Seats Elected From the Hill Const.	Total Seats Elected
MSCP	56	18	05	23
INC	44	07	04	11
FPM	36	02	04	06
BJP	38	05	01	06
NCP	40	01	04	05
MPP	30	04	00	04
RJD	13	00	01	01
JD(S)	02	01	00	01
SMT	34	01	00	01
JD(U)	17	00	01	01
Independents	40	01	00	01

Source: *Data Unit*, Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), 2000, New Delhi.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Nair, 'Party Organisation: From Civil Society to the state', in Richard s. Katza and Peter Nair (ed.), *How Parties Organise*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1994, p. 8.

In this election, even the Congress, which was dominant in electoral arena filled up only 44 candidates to contest the election. Thus, the main contenders from the regional parties are the MSCP, FPM, and the MPP. However, the MSCP on its own could manage to garner a single largest majority with 23 seats. Later on with the support of other legislature - six FPM, three NCP, one RJD, one JD (Secular) and Independent - the MSCP formed the government under the United Front of Manipur. Nipamacha Singh of MSCP became the Chief Minister of Manipur, again.

The state of Manipur has seen its 2<sup>nd</sup> Mid- Termed General Elections to the State Legislative Assembly on February 14 and 21, 2002 in the vally and Hill constituencies respectively. Besides being by-election held just two years after the previous one and during the imposition of President's Rule, this election was at time when the memory of an eventful episode of the cease-fire agreement between Government of India and the NSCN (IM) "without territorial limits", remained as its stillness. Thus, the impact of this critical decision of the NDA Government at the Centre was clearly reflected in the fractionalized politics of the state through this election.

It may be recalled that the political history of Manipur have demonstrated a kind of secular characteristic by producing its Chief Ministers from different communities in the state. In fact, the first CM of Manipur just after the attainment of statehood was a Muslim

while the longest serving CM of the state was from the Tangkhul tribe. But what is seen in this election is a clear picture of 'communal politics' in the state, particularly between the valley and the hill people as a repercussion of the cease-fire issue of the last year. On the hand, people having aware of that the political turmoil in the state is due to the frequent changing of party loyalty among the politicians looked this election an opportunity to give a political answer to those politicians. Thus, this election was comparatively held in a peacefull manner. The major rivlries among the political parties were the INC, the FPM, and the MSCP. Beside these, numbers of others like MNC, NCP, DRDP also entered into the electoral fray putting their role ahead at the wake of cease fire issue. But, the BJP due to their stand on the issue of cease-fire at the Centre, was expected by the valley people to give a way out. However, by going through the entire electoral history of Manipur, it always remained as a difficult task to make a prediction on the politics of the state where the ups and downs of every political parties were a pattern of political culture.

Thus, when the result came out, no party could secure an absolute majority again. But, the Congress got 20 seats out of 50 candidates it contested, the FPM- 13, the MSCP- 7, CPI- 5, BJP- 4, NCP- 3, SAP- 3, MPP- 2, DRDP- 2 and the MNC with 1. One remarkable picture of this electoral out come was that 41 out of the 58 sitting MLAs who contested this election lost their position. Even the losers included both the Chief Ministers in the last two years, W. Nipamacha Singh and Radhavinod Koijam, as well as the longest serving former Chief Minister of the state, Rishang Keishing. This indicates the loss of people's faith on the

aged-old politicians of the state. However, the Congress with the help of the MSCP, CPI, and the NCP formed the government under the banner of Manipur Secular Front (MSF).

An overall electoral history of Manipur thus suggest that the Congress party is the only alternative party which has the ability to play a dominant role in the politics of the state. This may be taken into consideration that the party has still managed to compromise the different interest groups of such highly segmented society like Manipur.

**Table. 8**

**The Party-wise electoral Performance of Mid-Termed General election, 2002 to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur**

Political Parties	Seats Contested in the Valley Const.	Seats Elected in the Valley Const.	Seats Contested in the Hill Const.	Seats Elected in the Hill Const.	Total Seats Elected
INC	40	10	18	10	20
FPM	32	10	15	03	13
MSCP	33	05	09	02	07
CPI	13	05	00	00	05
BJP	26	02	20	02	04
NCP	18	02	15	01	03
SAP	16	01	15	02	03
MPP	12	02	01	00	02
DRDP	21	02	02	00	02
MNC	14	01	05	00	01

Source: Shangai Express (Manipuri), Imphal, March 1, 2002.

### 3. Dynamics of Political Defection

After the decline of the Congress Party in the Centre and in most of the states, the general contours of the political power structure in the country underwent a fundamental change. The non-Congress forces, hitherto fragmented, saw in the situation an opportunity to seize power. With this, a new process of coalition making in the Centre involving political parties belonging to different ideological camps. In the words of L.M. Singvi, 'the highly fragmented opposition saw in the situation an opportunity to seize power and there began a process of non-Congress parties even those of the extreme right and the extreme left shedding their ideological edges and coming forward together to share power on the basis of what were called the agreed minimum common programmes.'<sup>16</sup> It can be argued that such sharing of power has brought about new political compulsions that in turn have affected the character of political parties in India. But, the crucial question is: can this process be seen as a sign of political fragmentation? Are these new developments ideologically retrogressive? Or has it opened up new opportunities for the political parties in the Country?

Of course, a critical observation on Indian politics suggests that the intense struggle for by different/contending social forces have contributed to a situation that is fundamentally fluid and full of possibilities. However, others see this recent developments leading to the 'politics of incapability'; the 'politics of confusion'; the 'politics of deviation' or merely the

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<sup>16</sup> L.M. Singvi(ed.), *The politics of Defection- A study of state politics in India*, National Publishing House. Delhi, 1969, p.4.



'politics of transition'.<sup>17</sup> It is a fact that every single case of collapse of a state government was the direct result of change of allegiance by legislators. This was the phenomenon of a large number of migratory legislators indulging in frequent marches and counter marches from one political platform to another. Precisely, the motive behind it was to gaining ministerial office or other personal benefit, if necessary by helping to topple successive governments and forming others in their places.

In fact, the various instances from within the state and from the outside show that the phenomenon of political defections is neither new nor unique. But, what is new is their magnitude, range and character bringing the political instability in the states. Since the legislators changed sides so frequently with some of the constantly sitting on the fence, the majority on one day may become the minority on the next day and *vice versa*. Besides many of the legislators having tasted power and having seen that by threatening to defeat, tried to have what they had bargained for. Thus, it appears that no stable ministry can be formed without a fresh election. As a result, elections are being increasingly seen by the people as devious means employed by the rules to periodically review their license to rule- more after to misrule. In the process, the political parties becomes hostages to the short-term aspirations of their leaders as well as the cadres.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.10.

However, it may be critically pointed out that even though political power may be desired for its own sake or to do good to the people, to secure benefits for one's caste, community, factions, party, family or self, yet, the ceremonial of popular elections in democratic society provides a purgatory for political power and that the politicians will remain the servants of the people and not become the master.

The problem of political defections can be looked at from several angles. Sometimes, mere conflict of personalities and temperamental incompatibilities between a legislator and his party boss may lead him to quit the party. Often, senior and trusted party workers may be denied tickets for contesting the election merely on grounds of their affiliation with the party's dissidents group. According to Subhash C. Kashyap, the reasons for the present day phenomenon of defection may be summed up, thus:<sup>18</sup>

- (1) the history and nature of political parties in India, particularly the Indian National Congress;
- (2) the ageing leadership, bossism and the growth of establishments with vested interests in status quo in almost all the parties;
- (3) the lack of ideological orientation and polarization among the parties;
- (4) the poor level of popular involvement in the membership, objects and activities of political parties and the virtual indifference of the people to acts of defection by their representatives;

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<sup>18</sup> Subhash, C. Kashyap, 'The Politics of Defections', National Publishing House, Delhi, 1969, p.p.379-380.

- (5) in fighting and factionalism in the parties with factions turning into group defections, for example, in case of denial of party tickets to members of a dissident faction;
- (6) the marginal and unstable majorities in state legislative Assemblies emerging after the 1967 elections and the prospects of even non-Congress parties being in positions of capturing power;
- (7) conflicts of personalities and temperamental incompatibilities between a legislators and his party bosses;
- (8) temptations of office, money status and the like, denial of the same;
- (9) the tremendous gap between the emoluments, status and other benefits attached to the office of a minister and that of an ordinary legislator;
- (10) the existence of powerful lobbies and pressure groups that command loyalties that are far more intense than loyalties to the political parties;
- (11) the unwillingness of the Congress party to share power and enter into workable conditions with established like minded parties.

From the above points, the first concern of a legislator is to retain his seat in the legislature and to ensure his re-election. Therefore, it may also be noted, that the average Indian legislator was performing a most difficult task with the bare-minimum amenities. But, it can be argued that, decline of ideology as a force in competitive politics also

contributes to the growth of defection politics. In such a political atmosphere, people tend to opt for change and the opposition parties in combination try to offer them an alternative.

Therefore, what provided the major and immediate incentive the large scale defection by legislators was the somewhat unexpected and the phenomenon success of the opposition parties at the polls and their emergence in such numerical strength as to be able to form, along or in combination, alternative governments to the ruling parties.

Of course, the fact remains that when we talk of political defection, the states of the North-East region of India loom large. The smaller states of the region have a different political experience in comparison to the other states of the country. A brief description on the political trends of the region reveals that political life of the states is marked by political instability where politicians shift their loyalties from one party to another. It is true that in this region, all sorts of alliances and bargains, sale and purchase of legislators, horse-trading etc. tend to continue. Due to factionalism, various governments suffer from instability. As a result, the imposition of President's Rule has become a common feature in the region.

By and large, member of different political parties do not view ideology as something that differentiates them from one another. To them, it is the electoral compulsion

that pits one party against the other. They all give the same slogans and promise more or less the same things but they can have special appeal for some sections of electorate than others. It was also found that even though, these parties are to seek votes on slogans such as stability, clean administration, economic renovation, law and order maintenance, quality education and so on, none of the parties seems to have done any serious thinking on how their proclaimed objectives can be fulfilled. It is the to have power, and the incentives that come along with it, that makes 'defection' such a strategic choice for the legislators.

### **3.1 History of Political Defection in Manipur**

In Manipur, the politics of defection can be traced to period prior to attainment of her statehood. It was in September 1967 that the Congress Ministry led by Koireng Singh lost its majority due to the defections of some of its supporters and thus he had to resign from the post. The opposition members with the help of Congress defectors formed the United Legislators Front (ULF) and claimed a majority. Thus, a ULF ministry, headed by Thambou Singh, was installed. However, the Congress party claimed the return of a couple of defectors and gave a notice of no- Confidence Motion against the Thambou Ministry. Meantime, since the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, both belonging to the Congress party resigned, no alternative candidates to hold this key post were forthcoming. As result, the

Assembly was unable to meet.<sup>19</sup> It was a time when the 32 members house of the state was equally divided in two groups, the Congress and the other. Since then, Manipur had started entering into the politics of defection before it was fully born as a state.

After the conferment of statehood, on July 31, 1972, the ministry of the United Legislators Party headed by Md. Alimuddin had to suffer political dissension when all the three members of NIC and two independents joined the Congress legislators party followed by the defection one MPP member. The political events reduced the strength of ULP but it was able to raise to 36 in august 1972 giving it a comfortable majority. However, soon on March 15 1973, 9 members including 2 minister and deputy speaker of the ULP suddenly denounced the actions of ULP ministry and defected to the opposition. Later on, a 'no-confidence motion' was initiated against the government on March 23. On March 26 1973, Alimuddin submitted his resignation. Subsequently, the Assembly was adjourned *sine die* by the Speaker, the same day. On March 28, 1973 President's Rule was imposed in Manipur and the state Assembly was dissolved.<sup>20</sup>

In Manipur, there were three coalition governments between July 10 1974 and May 16, 1977. The first one was the Democratic Front Ministry headed by Yangmaso Shaiza and, the second and third were headed by R.K. Dorendro Singh of Congress party under the Congress-ULP coalition and the Congress-CPI coalition respectively. But, surprisingly, all

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<sup>19</sup> Sudhakar Bhat, *The Challenges of the North East*, Popular Prakasan, Bombay, 1975, p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> *Government of Manipur*, 'Administrative Report- 1972-73, p. 3

these ministries formed without MPP, which was the strongest regional political party in the state.

In course of time, following the formation of Janata Government at the Centre, there was a split in the Congress Legislator Party. As a result, R.K. Dorendro's government was reduced to a minority in May 1977 as More MLAs continue to join the Janata Party. Finally, President's Rule was proclaimed on May 16 1977. But on June 29 1976, a new Janata Ministry under Yangmaso Shaiza was installed. All the members of the Congress party and of MPP, quite surprisingly, joined the Janata Legislator Party. This raised its strength to 55 in the house of 60 members. The CPI with four members was the one and the only opposition party in the state.<sup>21</sup> This proved that most of the politicians did not value their party's principles and were, more often than not, guided by the their own narrow interest and ambition. Reflecting on the situation, a national newspaper, in a satirical vein, wrote that, "In Manipur ... MLAs change their parties more often than they do their underwear."<sup>22</sup>

In 1980s, with the return of the Congress party, a modicum of political stability returned to the state. This, particularly after the failure in the Janata experiment, affected the political scenario in Manipur. In fact, the party, which came back in the center stage of the national politics, was to play the same role in the state. It may considered as the general phenomenon that affected at the all India level. But, it may be pointed out that the instability

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<sup>21</sup> K. C. Chaudhuri, 'Where Defection are a way of life', *Sunday*, (Calcutta), May 21, 1978, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> The Indian Express, April 11, 1973 (also see S.K. Chaube, *op. cit.*, p.106.)

of political process in the state more or less was influenced by the existing political situation at the national level. Moreover, it appeared at that time that the political parties in the state are so fragmented that they had to adjust themselves to the logic of the national politics. According to Balveer Arora, "parties of the North-eastern states have traditionally demonstrated flexibility and have readily adapted the changes in the power structure at New Delhi by supporting or even affiliating themselves with the ruling party of the moment."<sup>23</sup> In fine, in order to survive and enter into the political arena, it has become an inevitability for the small state like Manipur. But, to make a political prediction through this development only during this decade, is very difficult and assume that Manipur is experiencing the politics of instability.

In more than a decade, on February 23, 1990 the first non- Congress ministry headed by R.K. Ranbir Singh of MPP was again installed under the banner of United Legislature Front. The arrival of a consensus on the leadership question was not easy. Therefore, in some sense, this was a marriage of convenience to capture power from the Congress. The difference among its constituent parties on the issue of leadership was never fully resolved. Moreover, the ULF strength of 32 against the Congress 26 provides too narrow a margin in a state like Manipur, where factionalism and defections were rampant. Unexpectedly, a sudden split was headed by former Home minister, I. Tompok from the Congress with 13 other MLAs leaving the party only with 12 legislators and a new party called the "Manipur

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<sup>23</sup> Balveer Arora, 'Regional Aspirations and National Cohesion in the 1998 Lok Sabha Election', *West Bengal Political Science Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1-2, January- December, 1998, p. 66.



Congress(MC)” was formed under his leadership. In the political milieu, five Janata Dal legislators deserted the Front on 5 January 1992 bringing the UF government to a minority. Subsequently, President’s rule was again imposed in the state on 7 January 1992. In fact, the challenges before Ranbir Singh arose when he attempted to expand the ministry who he had to find ways to accommodate all factions within the alliance. Thus, the Ranbir ministry was repeatedly been in the midst of crises because of the latent strains between the two major coalition partners i.e. the MPP and the Janata Dal.

Of late, the politics of Manipur had to meet an unstable phase all over again in the month of August 1997, when the Congress ministry headed by Rishang Keishing went to take a critical stand on the declaration of the cease fire agreement between the India Government and North-East’s most powerful rebel group NSCN(IM) with effect from August 1, 1997. Because of this, there were apprehensions among the people about the territorial integrity of their state. It led to mass rallies, procession, dharnas, mostly in the valley region of the state. The final blow on the Congress government came and the two years and ten months old Keishing ministry was reduced to minority after a split by 23 Congress legislators under the leadership of then Speaker W. Nipamacha Singh. The major issue, which related to this defection within the Congress party, was the proposal of the Naga insurgents to cede certain part of state inhabited Naga people and to form a greater Nagaland. The position of Keishing, a Tangkhul Naga on this issue was ambiguous. Even there was a protest all over the state in different forms and by different organization. ‘A

virtual bandh was also called in Imphal town on August 21, 1997 against the cease-fire agreement.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, the repeated assurance by the center on this score failed to dispel the valley people's fears. Therefore, politicians from the valley, cutting across party lines, were suspicious of Keishing's role in this rapidly unfolding process in the region. His closeness to the NSCN(IM), a Naga Insurgency group<sup>25</sup> was seen as a threat by these politicians of Manipur. Thus, a new political party "Manipur State Congress Party" under Nipamach Singh emerged to take up the issue with the support of FPM and CPI and formed the government. It is interesting here to note that, in order to retain the power, Nipamacha Singh putting 25 cabinet in the ministry created a sort of history by heading biggest ever cabinet in the state. With this split, the fraction reduce Congress with a strength of 15 MLA in the Assembly less its ability to work as a cohesive force in the process, lost its status as a main opposition party. As a result, the Congress party was in shambles. The dramatic rise of the MSCP within the political limits compelled the Congress to forge a political alliance even with MPP, its arch rival, in 2000 Assembly election. From this, one can conclude that the MSCP was becoming a political force in the state.

However, such an assumption will be incorrect. The issue of leadership cropped up once again within the United Front Ministry of MSCP and FPM. Because of his inability to

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<sup>24</sup> *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, August 23, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Barun Das Gupta, "Defection and Political Change", *Frontline*, January 19, 1998.

control the growing problem of insurgency and economic crisis in the state, the majority of the MSCP legislators urged to stepping down of Nipamacha Singh from the Chief-Ministership. On the other side surprisingly, a group of the Congress legislators except for the former Chief Minister Rishang Keishing, suddenly left the party. Later on, the Congress defectors merged into Samata party under the leadership of Radhabinod Akoijam. Finally, with the end of the Nipamacha ministry, the Samata Party led alliance, 'Manipur People's Democratic Front' with the support of all the political party of the state except the Congress, formed the government in February 2001 under the head of Radhabinod Akoijam. Thus, Manipur created another record of having only one opposition member of the Congress party in a legislative assembly.

Of course, the entry of Samata party was a turning point in the political history of the state. But, like other political parties, it could not survive too long as the dissensions came up within the alliance partners leading to its exit in June 2001 and Manipur was imposed the President's Rule as a tradition for 'eight occasions' in a short period of 30years. In fact, the imposition of President's Rule is not only to serve the Centre's partisan politics in the state but also, in more occasion, due to the political instability in the process of governance. From this, it may be noted that the center-state relation is less related to the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur as done in other cases.

#### 4. Coalition Experience and Electoral Politics in Meghalaya

In Meghalaya, the first general election to the newly created sixty-member Legislative Assembly was held on March 9, 1972. Before the election, it was found that the Garo Hills and the Jaintia Hills district councils were being run by the APHLC, a regional party, and the Khasi Hills District Council was being run by another regional Party;<sup>26</sup> from this, one can visualize the importance of the regional political forces in Meghalaya. Moreover, the dominant position in the district councils of the state is one indicator of the political party's strength in the areas. The APHLC always claimed its pioneering role in the formation of the state and has always used the language of 'identity politics' for electoral mobilization. On contrary, the Congress used the language of development by stressing that for their development the tribal people should ally with the national party that ruled at the Centre.<sup>27</sup>

Table: 9

**Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 1<sup>st</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1972.**

Political Parties	Seats Elected From Jaintia Hills	Seats Elected From Khasi Hills	Seats Elected From Garo Hills	Total Seats Elected
APHLC	02	13	17	32
INC	00	04	05	09
Independents	05	12	02	19

Source: V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> S.K. Chaube, *op.cit.*, p.137.

<sup>27</sup> P.C. Biswas, 'Electoral Politics in N.E. India: With Special Reference to Meghalaya', in P.S. Dutta(ed), *op.cit.*, 77

However, the elections result was the APHLC-32, the Congress Party -9, and Independent 19. The electoral success of the Congress was mainly in the constituencies which were dominantly non-tribal.<sup>28</sup> Even though, there was a pre- poll alliance between the APHLC and the Congress (I), the former formed the ministry all by itself with 39 seats (after the merger of 7 Independents members of the legislature) in the 60 member house.<sup>29</sup>

In Election of 1978 witnessed the emergence of the tribal students and youth as a force in Meghalaya. They tend to put pressure on the leaders of the regional parties to come to an understanding for formation of the Ministry as to prevent the Congress from coming to power in the state. The major slogans of all the regional parties were for the 'protection of tribal identity'. The 'anti-outsider' slogan was also used to mobilize people during the election. These regional parties saw a great political advantage in branding the Congress as a party of the outsiders.. In its manifesto, the APHLC put the preservation of identity of tribal, the development of the customs and culture and to play a constructive role in the national affairs. The HSPDP included the extension of reservation of seats for the scheduled caste and tribe in the Union and state legislature and to stop the transfer of land to non-tribals in the state. On the other hand, the Congress pledged to uphold the ideals of secularism, and ensured a sound administration, fight poverty, ignorance, to protect the territorial integrity and promised to continue the work for the restoration of the contiguous areas inhabited by

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> V Venkata Rao, *A Century of Government and Politics in the North-East India*, Vol. II, (Meghalaya), 1874-1983, S. Chand, New Delhi 1994, p.121.

the tribal people. But when the election result produced no single party majority, the Congress being the largest majority party, expected to form the ministry, by winning some leaders from the other regional parties.

**Table. 10**

**Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1978.**

Political Parties	Seats Elected From Jaintia Hills	Seats Elected From Khasi Hills	Seats Elected From Garo Hills	Total Seats Elected
APHLC	02	06	08	16
HSPDP	03	11	00	14
INC	00	09	11	20
Independents	02	03	05	10

Source: V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East. State Elections in India, 1985.

However, it was not possible because of the pressure of the tribal students and youths movements on the regional leaders.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, when the crises arose over the question of choosing the leader who would lead the Ministry, it was propagated that unless a stable ministry is formed, there might be imposition of President's rule. As response to that situation, B.B. Lyngdoh, APHLC leader was ready to ally with the Congress. Consequent to this, in May 1978, under the United Meghalaya Parliamentary Democratic forum, a coalition Ministry was formed with B.B. Lyngdoh as Chief Minister for two years only. There was a solemn, serious agreement honoured by all the UMPDF members, including the Hill State Peoples Democratic Party (HSPDP), that their member will become the Deputy Chief-

<sup>30</sup> P.C. Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

Minister for four years till the next general election.<sup>31</sup> This arrangement worked out to the end of the term and on B.B.Lyngdoh's handing over charge to Captain W.Sangma, he became the chief-Minister. Much of what went on among the parties actually involved their leaders. It is possible to argue that people had little role in these power-sharing arrangement in the state. So the pattern which evolved by maneuvering, did not actually reflect the opinion of the electorate. However, the parties forming this forum, though run the administration for about four years, faced the electorate separately during the next election in 1983.<sup>32</sup>

The General Election of 1983 to the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya may be taken into a deeper consideration to examine the political trends of the state for it has produce some kind political consensus in the process of choosing the parties that have to formulate the public opinions. In fact, the merger of the APHLC to the Congress Party brought a drastic sense in the political equation among the regional parties. This merger was a striking factor for the Congress party to become stronger in this tiny state. It may also be argued that in a society with a strong sense of traditional way of life, it is essential for a political party to adapt and understand the sentiments of the people in that society. Thus, the footing of the Congress party in the politics of Meghalaya is closely related to its ideological stand which accommodates and formulate the principles and the policies on the basis of the society. Since the regional parties in the state did not have a clear ideology of its own, and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> P.C. Biswas. *op. cit.* , p. 81.

the lack of political consciousness among the electorates, it was more easier for the Congress party to enter into the politics of the state by providing a room for the leaders of the state in the national level. Moreover, like in other states of the country, the Congress party's comeback to power in 1980 at the center also led the people to think that it would be better to give a mandate for their socio-economic and political development in the state. Because of its limited resources, the well-known fact remains that the state is in need of the centrally assisted developmental programmes.

However, the rising popularity of the regional parties among the different tribes always proved that no party was able to get an absolute majority in this election. Besides, the stillness of the job done by the regional parties like the APHLC and the HSPDP during the statehood demand was also one reason to check the increasing popularity of the Congress party even if the 'Indira wave' dispersed among the common electorates. But, before the election an assumption always appeared that the Congress party was to show the dominant position in sharing the seats.

**Table. 11**

**Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1983.**

Political Parties	Seats Elected From Jaintia Hills	Seats Elected From Khasi Hills	Seats Elected From Garo Hills	Total Seats Elected
INC	01	06	18	25
APHLC	01	09	05	15
HSPDP	03	11	00	14
PDIC	00	02	00	02
Independents	02	01	01	04

Source: V. B. Singh and Shankar Bose, *Data Hand Book on Vidhan Sabha Ekection, 1952- 1985*, Vol. 3; the East & North East, State Elections in India, 1985.



As the table 10 shows that the Congress party could comfortably capture 25 seats while APHLC ended with only 15, HSPDP 14, PDIC 02, and the Independents with 04. Finally, the Congress party, using its political skill, rode the government again.

The major fight of the General election of January, 1988 was between the ruling Congress (I) and the main opposition party, the Hill Peoples' Union (HPU). Before the election, it was remarked that "Meghalaya is being ruled by a Congress (I) Government formed with the help of defectors from the APHLC, the United Meghalaya Democratic Party(UMDP) and Independents. The Government is held together by a liberal infusion of funds allegedly pocketed to a considerable extent by the ruling coterie."<sup>33</sup> However, when the result came out, even counting in two seats having been withheld, the Congress (I) secured 21 seats as against 19 by the HPU. In this election, the role of the regional parties and independent candidates who have bagged the remaining seats, assumed the importance of forming a coalition government. The Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) could maintain only 5 seats, the People's Demand Implementation Convention-2, the All People's Hill Legislature Council (APHLC)-2 and Independents-9.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Congress emerged as the single largest group, but without a majority and a government was formed by combination of regional parties.

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<sup>33</sup> *Tribune*, Chandigarh, Dec. 28, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> *National Herald*, New Delhi, Feb. 5, 1988.

However, that government lasted hardly a month, due to the dissensions cropped within the alliance partners and thus the Congress (I) was become the alternative one to form the government.

In 1993, the general election to the State Legislative Assembly was held in Meghalaya. Prior to the election, there was a common agenda for all the regional parties to come up as a single voice under the pressuring motives of the tribal people in the state. But, it was not an easy task for them, for a state like Meghalaya where the ethnic division was clearly seen at the time of election. In fact, it was a usual scenario that the elections in the State were one way of showing the tensions among the different ethnic or tribal groups falling into the different political parties. From this, it may be noted here that the different leaders from the different political parties dominated by each of the ethnic groups have to look the electorates for their own benefits. Even there was a move for all the regional parties to merge and unite under the name of the Hill People's Union (HPU); but due to the failure of bringing out an agreement among the different regional and state political parties, there had to be a tougher fight among these parties in this election. Moreover, under some circumstances cropped up suddenly, one of the strongest party, APHLC was also split away when most of the prominent leaders joined the HPU and only few remained under the name of APHLC (AM). Besides, the formation of another party called Meghalaya People's Party (MPP) was also a demoralizing factor to the political situation of the state as its emergence was a negative indicator in the politics of power sharing among the regional parties. In a true

sense, the party is, more, a bi-product of dissidents groups developed from personality conflict among the political leaders. In short, the party does not care much about the regional sentiments. On the other hand, the rising factionalism among the regional parties only benefited the Indian National Congress which had a widespread network coupled with its capability to convince the electorates through its long history of dominant position in the Indian politics. Therefore, it was assumed that the Congress Party would be the only alternative party that could have the highest probability to get the largest number of seats in these elections. Even though the party had a small vote bank in the Jaintia hill areas, it is in a dominant position in other larger areas, viz. Khasi Hills and the Garo Hills which constitute the 53 of the total 60 Assembly seats. This was a major factor in the congress party's ability to attract the electorate. One more significant feature of this electoral scene was the larger number of independent contestants falling into the electoral arena.

**Table. 12**

**Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 5<sup>th</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1993.**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Jaintia Hills</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Khasi Hills</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Garo Hills</b>	<b>Total Seats Elected</b>
INC	02	08	14	24
HPU	03	03	00	11
HSPDP	01	07	00	08
APHLC(AM)	01	02	00	03
MPP	00	00	02	02
PDIC	00	02	00	02
Independents	00	02	08	10

**Source:** Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly (Meghalaya), 1993, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

This is one sort of indicator that the politics of the State is highly centered around the personality of the candidate.

However, when the results were declared, no party could get an absolute majority. But the Congress party secured the largest number with 24 seats, HPU-11, HSPDP-08, APHLC (AM)-03, MPP-02, PDIC-02 and the Independents-10. It can be mentioned here that the larger the number of Independent candidates winning, the more bigger is the chance of the single largest party, i.e. the Congress to form the Government.

In Meghalaya, the February 1998 election had once again produced no majority. After the election, the Congress (I) formed the government led by S.C. Marak. However, It lasted for only 12 days thereby creating a history of the shortest tenure in the Meghalaya politics.<sup>35</sup> It may be noted that Meghalaya had the distinction of having a lottery government and a 50:50; sharing of power. In fact, the state continuously had coalition governments of one national party m, i.e. Congress and a number of regional or rather local parties or its combinations.

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<sup>35</sup> V. Rao, Venkata. *op. cit.*, p.126

**Table. 13**

**Party-wise Performance in the Different Hill Areas in the 6<sup>th</sup> General Election to the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, 1998.**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Jaintia Hills</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Khasi Hills</b>	<b>Seats Elected From Garo Hills</b>	<b>Total Seats Elected</b>
INC	00	08	17	25
UDP	07	12	01	20
HSPDP	00	03	00	03
PDM	00	02	01	03
BJP	00	02	01	03
GNC	00	00	01	01
Independents	00	02	03	05

Source: Statistical Report on the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly (Meghalaya), 1998, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

The Congress had always managed to survive and in spite of the local pressure groups, whose slogan was the preservation of the tribal identity and development of their customs and culture, urge to have a regional party in power, no strong regional party of the Khasi could emerge. Although there are a number of them like, APHLC, HSPDP, PDIC etc., one single party reflecting the Khasi aspirations failed to emerge. This has happened because the tribal elite's eager to become MLA and ministers has no ideological inclination, no any intention or agenda for the development of their region. In the absence of such inclination, neither a regionalist ideology nor a regional party which could develop the regional sentiment of the people, was born.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> P.C. Biswas, *op. cit.*, p.77.

In such context, the Congress, while stressing the necessity and the benefit of the tribal people, remaining with the national party that controlled power in the Centre, expressed its concern for the development of the tribal areas, providing the tribal identity in order to give the people's support. As a result, the people were at a loss to actually differentiate between a regional party and the national party as none of them had any specific socio-economic programme for the common people. Because of this little difference among the parties, after the spectacle of floor crossing is being witnessed in the state affecting the instability of any ministry.

Moreover, the emergence of Indira Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the INC improved the image of the party in the hills. Meghalaya, as a state in the federation, was considered a gift of Indira Gandhi to the hill people. This has also narrowed down the rift between the INC and the regional parties of the hills. Thus, Politics in Meghalaya, was mainly centered round some generalizations and influenced by personalities rather than any political or economic programme. Above all, the political figure like P. A. Sangma who played a dominant role in national politics also strongly influenced the local leaders to make the Congress party to become in such position.

## **5. Political Alliance: An imperative of Coalition Politics in North East**

In India, the regional organizational base of the major political parties of states can be traced to activities that began prior to Independence, and to the adaptation of those activities to the post independent period which account for the absence of a single dominant party. One clear picture in the country was that the problem of integration, with a process of bringing culturally and socially discrete groups together into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a sense of loyalty to that unit, existed immensely in the state. From this, the question, which can be put up is whether or not the political parties of the state characterized by marked regional bases have been able to form a temporal alliance in order to carry out goals with some measure of stability in their relationship. In fact, the complex pattern of party system, which was in evidence in the state politics made it inevitable to form coalition ministries in tacit or implied and in express or formal forms.

In this context, the pattern of coalition politics that have emerged in the state and their bearing on the political system need to be examined properly in order to ascertain the measure of political integration.

In general, a coalition is a parliamentary or political grouping less permanent than a party or a faction or an interest group.<sup>37</sup> Of course, it is an offshoot of competitive multi-

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<sup>37</sup> William H. Ricker, "The study of coalition" in *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol.II. New York, Macmillan Free Press, 1968, p.524

party politics in the event of inability of any single party to form a ministry in the House.<sup>38</sup> This indicates that the possibility of forming coalitions in a bi-party system, is not altogether ruled out. However, 'it becomes necessary for one of the two to ally itself with any minor group or party strong enough to keep it in power,<sup>39</sup> when no party is able to secure an absolute majority in the election. Coalition formation can also take place only within the context of mixed motives in which both conflict and common interest are simultaneously present.<sup>40</sup> Thus, coalition may be permanent and may have effects on politics depending on the political situation. Therefore, formation coalition involves one process by which cleavage and consensus are balanced in social organization.<sup>41</sup>

In India, the eventual emergence of the regional groups as independent political forces at the state level was one of most important reason for the establishment of coalition politics. By turning into regional parties from regional groups, they became the ruling parties either on their own or in coalition with some other regional outfits and tried to block the dominant roles played by the national parties in the politics of the state. Thus, the national parties had to face a serious challenge from these parties, largely in the state level. In 1980, according to Sudha Pai, 'two types of two party system emerged in India: those in

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<sup>38</sup> F. A. Ogg, *Coalition Formation in op.cit.*, p.530.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> W.A. Gramson, *Coalition Formation, op.cit.*, p.530.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*p.533.



which regional parties formed the principal opposition to the Congress, and those in which the principal opposition was from other all India parties.<sup>42</sup>

As pointed out, the rise of the regional parties was literally stepping in to fill up the space created by the gradual but steady decline of the congress. On the other hand, it was also seen that many of the regional parties emerged to the background in the wake of the larger regional issue. But, after the achievement of their demands, these political parties have to suffer from the question of political survival. This made them not only coalition but also merge their identities into a single political entity. Meanwhile, the national parties also have acquired a deep- rooted stronghold in such states or region when they pick up some micro issued of the areas and ensured grass-root mobilization through their state units which have acted more like regional party. Because of their immense power, resources and a countrywide network, the tasks of the national parties to ensure them and to compete with the regional parties are very easy. As a result, sometime survival compulsion and political economic considerations led regional parties to join a national party in capturing power. In the process, according to Yogendra Yadav, two scenario seems possible in India; “first, a pan Indian party, catering to the various religios and Caste minority groups, scattered all over the country, emerging as the pivot, rallying several regional parties, with state or sub

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<sup>42</sup> Sudha Pai, ‘From One Party Dominance to Multi Partyism: Regionalising Trends in the Development of the Indian’ in S. Bhatnagar & Pradeep Kumar(ed.), *Some Issues in Contemporary Indian Politics*, Ess Ess,Delh, 1997, p.p. 172- 173.

state level electoral support, around it; second, the various powerful regional parties themselves coalescing at the all India level with some other cross regional parties, governing from the Centre with the help of their smaller regional allies who may be operative only in some States or even in various regional pockets of these states.”<sup>43</sup>

The states of the North East India, where the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural are of the social fabric, have been marked not only the home of mushrooming state or regional political parties but also for the history of coalition politics. Particularly in the smaller states of Manipur and Meghalaya, politics of coalition emerged in their day of state formation. By going through the political history of these smaller states, it can be easily, pointed out that defection, dissension, coalition and early collapse of the newly formed government are characteristic of these regional parties.

In fact, most of the regional parties in these states are conglomeration of people belonging to different tribes and sub-tribes whose loyalty has been towards the tribes and not to the party ideology. However, the nature of the diverse social structure in the region was also one reason for the emergence of different local parties based on different competing ethnic groups. Therefore, it is not possible for one political party to a dominant role in the politics of these states. This indicates the compulsion of political alliance among the different political parties for the government formation or in fighting the election.

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<sup>43</sup> Yogendra Yadav, Electoral Analysis: Issues and the Verdict, Frontline, Nov.26,1999.

However, the different interests among the different political parties based on different communities and ethnic group have created the reason for the frequent fall of the government formed by these parties. In fact, the intension for the formation of political alliance by these regional parties is to prevent the increasing influence of political process in the region. But, when the power remains at the hands stronger political apparatus, these parties look at the side of national parties that have a better political sphere at the Centre. Moreover, in these states, because of their smallness in the number of people's representatives at the national level, the importance for these parties to make an alliance with the all India party was very much for their survival and political gains.

Above all, the biggest political events in these states were the electoral scenario that came once in five years. Therefore, only at the time of this occasion, people played their active political role, only in campaigning for their candidates. With the end of the electoral process, people also seemed to cease their activities of political participation. It is because of the fact that most of the people working for a particular political party during the election time is not based on the political affiliation of that party. It is, more or less, because of the relationship between the candidate and his workers. As the nature of the society in the region was a 'closed one', such political patterns were also possible in these states. Therefore, it can also be argued that the candidate's ability to interact with vast circle of personal contact among the electorates in the constituency is one way to decide his political fortune in the North East Region.

## CONCLUSION

At the heart of democracy, lies the fundamental idea for the possibility of the continuous restructuring of the ruling group in majority. In a democracy, 'a person in the minority today must have a reasonable hope of being in the majority tomorrow. Likewise, the ruling group currently in the majority must also be aware that in future it may sit on the back benches.'<sup>1</sup> The very meaning of it explains that democracy is not just for the majority, for it requires the satisfaction the particular interest of all individuals and groups in the society. It may be noted that the equality of treatment to all citizens is the basis for a democratic polity. But, all societies are composed of many different groupings and interest whose needs and claims are frequently in conflict with each other. Since the politics is the only resort to achieve the societal goal in a democratic society, these groupings urge for the social formation leading to the political formation. In the process, the emergence of political parties is closely related to the nature of its social foundation. After all, political parties emerge from society to politically respond to the demands of these groupings and interests. In other word, political parties and party systems are to be treated as part of political process that mediates between state and society. Therefore, one of the most important functions of a political party is the social integration of individuals belonging to different groupings into society and the body politic. But, due to the failure of it, each grouping germinated as political party in order to claim their own political goal leading to a larger number of

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<sup>1</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, "What is Democracy", *Seminar* 389, January, 1992, p.p. 36-39.

conflicting interests. Here, it may be pointed out that understanding a party system obviously involves an understanding of the institutional setting, the entire group system and its cleavages, the political culture and the process of political socialization and recruitment. Therefore, the general argument on the state of political parties lies that the broader the scope of party activities, the greater the need for strong party organization and the more involved member are in party life.

Infact, the political parties play a very important role in democratic countries by educating and organizing the public opinion by restructuring the process of governance. They are the means by which citizens have an opportunity to redress the performance of their rulers. Therefore, the life cycle of any political party contains electoral ups and downs. In a liberal democracy, a political party is assumed to be capable of achieving power or influencing governmental decisions by mobilizing public opinion through persuasion rather than coercion.

Of course, 'the act of voting is not simply the result of what the voter brings to the ballot box; rather it is the product of the interaction between parties and the voters'.<sup>2</sup> Thus, elections constitute the authorization by the people of key public officials to ensure both accountability of government to the full range of public opinion in the formulation of law

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<sup>2</sup> As cited in Elinor Scarbrough, "The British Election Study and Electoral Research", Political Studies, Vol.48,2000, p.p. 391-414.

and policy.<sup>3</sup> It may here be claimed that the electoral process of a country is one of the most important event to define the state of party system in that country within a limited period. On the other hand, “elections are a type of political market, in which parties offer their candidates and their policies in exchange for the votes needed to gain office. In this market, political parties gain what is surely their key resources to control the public office”.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, with the repeated failure of the political parties in power to fulfill the aspiration of the mass electorate coupled with the disinterestedness of a large section of electorates to the politics, elections become a kind of market complex where the electorates and political parties bargain for the price of a voter’s mandate. Thus, a huge quantum of money was being spent by the candidates at time of election to conquer the heart of people who have no political leaning to a particular party. In such system, it may be argued that political parties played a little role in measuring the weight-age of their electoral success or loss.

In modern India, the social reformist role played by the Indian Association during the British rule was a crucial contribution to the political process. It was from that long termed interaction with the British India that the leaders of these movements paved the way to raise political consciousness and the value of constitutional agitation in India. From this, the Indian intelligentsia got an opportunity of institutionalizing a sustainable organizational principles leading to the formation of modern political parties and the party system. Therefore, it may be noted that these social movements were the precursors for the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> J.A. Schlesinger, ‘on the theory of party organization’, *Journal of Politics*, Vol.48,1984, p.381.

emergence of party system, the foundation of Indian National Congress in particular. The INC was a composite party system in the way it handled its own internal matters as well as the nationalist movement and negotiations with the British government.

Of course, the Indian National Congress emerged to represent the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national body to express the political and economic demands of the Indians to the British colonial rule. In the words of Madhvarao Schindia, 'the independence movement under the banner of the Indian National Congress was confined not just to the political paradigm of freedom but embraced the entire spectrum of political, social and, indeed, the psychological uplift of every section of society'.<sup>5</sup> By focusing on the adaptability of the multi-sectarian, multi-cultural tradition of pre-independence India, the INC played the key role in mobilizing the mass participation in the freedom struggle. Thus, it can be rightly claimed that the main emphasis of the INC during this period was to lead the movement at the national arena for a common cause with various political groups within it.

With the end of freedom struggle after the attainment of Indian independence, the political process of the country underwent a drastic change. The INC became a political party thereby transforming its political strategy from the "policy of accommodation to the 'policy of consensus'. In fact, the ability of the Congress leadership to aggregate the

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<sup>5</sup> Madhavrao Schindia, "Dangers of Fundamentalism", Seminar 388, December, 1991, p. 27.

divergent views within the party itself was the major factor for the establishment of 'one party dominance' in India. It will be worth noting that no political party in any democratic country could have enjoyed such a dominant position as the Congress did. But, one can not leave the part of the task faced by the Congress in the post-independence period in consolidating the number of princely states into a single political unit. The loss of its dominant position at the center and several states in 1967 and the split of 1969 gave a way for the dissident group within the Congress party to emerge into different political parties based on the regional sentiments. The inability of the Congress leaders to control the divergent sections within itself have caused such malaise leading the growth of regional parties in India. Thus, the shift from one party dominant system to multi-party system has paved the way for the entry of coalition politics in the country.

Of course, if one looks from the democratic points of view, coalition politics is a natural development in a diverse society like India. But, in recent years, the increasing political instability in the state level in particular has provided a serious threat in experiencing the democracy. It may here be noted that in a country where the democratic value is not clearly understood, it is difficult for the political parties to survive within the parameter of political arena. Therefore, the political mobilization should be the top priority for them in order to understand, "what democracy is all about." After all, a mass consciousness is the sole panacea for proper functioning of the democracy.



In North Eastern states of India, the existing social system is of a 'closed social groups' who have distinct values, belief and identity among the different communities. In such social structure, the invocation of group solidarity is a path to keep a substantial part of the mass following in a more or less constant state of ideological mobilization along a given cleavage. In fact, people of the region possess the social and the cultural-ideological homogeneity while they lack the ideological substances of politics. Thus, the emergence of political parties in the region was the product of the rising movements for the greater autonomy and the statehood demands. With the achievement of such demands, their roles became very limited in educating the public politically and socially. As a result of this lack of political activities, people looked most of the political parties alike in their principles and policies. In other words, political parties in the region are not by-product of different ideological convictions but rather these groupings represent interest of the political ideology. From this, the mushrooming of parties in recent years does not indicate a distinct division of ideological substances and principles. Therefore, it may be here concluded that the shifting of electorates from one party to another at the time of electoral outcome does not carry their party preference. In such situation, it was not so surprising that the Congress party, because of their historical background coupled with secular notion of political ideology, became a riding force in the region. But, one looks at the position of the BJP in the region, it will be easily found that the strong 'Hindutva theme' of the party has been one reason for the other existing parties to comfortably check the footing of the BJP in a highly Christian

concentrated areas. So, it proves itself the relevance of the party even though the party has a little support base in the region.

However, the coalition politics in the region, in recent years, has provided a system of political alignment without any ideological value of the political parties. Thus, the formation of coalition government led by the Samata Party with help of the BJP in Manipur in 2001 only indicates the prevalence of a loose party system in the state. By going through such trend and easy break-up with easy formation of political alliances in the region, it may also be concluded that the pattern of alliance formation is not based on the party line but more or less on the personality lines. As a result of this, the installation of huge number of ministerial post in every government has been a way of political life, only to get the personal support creating the state of economic deficit in the state. Besides, this allocation of ministerial post to the supporters has provided a psychological tendency for the growth of defections in the region.

Of course, a closer observation of political trends in the region suggests that the electoral mandate in the region has been systematically dissociated from the process of government formation. Thus, they appear to know relatively little about party policies and structure of government. In fact, the comparatively impressive electoral turnout in the region should not be taken as the deciding factor for gauging the level of political consciousness in a close society where the socio-cultural fabric that fuse the people and the primordial ties

between the candidates and the voters are an integral part of the society. As it is clearly seen, the personal contact between the electorates and the candidates is of utmost significance during the election process. Therefore, the voting pattern is, in most cases, influenced by the candidates' familial lineage rather than his parties. From this, it can be claimed that the easy break up of politicians from one party to another does not affect much to his electoral success or defeats.

One more significant picture about the behaviour of electorates in the region is that most of the voter preferred the candidate who may have the higher probability of holding the ministerial post after the election. This is mainly because of the fact that their elected member was expected by the people to provide some kind of developmental programmes in his home constituency. Consequently, when the elected member changes his party loyalty, from which he is elected, to get a key post in the government by joining another party, the electorates have to follow in accordance with his will hoping that it will render for the betterment of the constituency. In the process, the rulers are, by and large, dedicated to only their own sectional interest and they cannot rise to the role of being representatives of the people as a whole. Thus, it may here be noted that even if the frequent changes of party loyalty have been rough in the region, it is beyond doubt that a majority of the voters elect their representatives without being aware that their own fate is through that process. This 'unpolitical mandate' has heightened the threat to survival of political parties in the region.

In summation, such political culture in the region is due to the complete lack of political awareness. Therefore, political awareness defined in terms of intellectual or effective engagement with public affairs and a sense of sacrifice for the welfare of the people among political parties and politicians are the sole panacea to cope up the political instabilities and tensions in the region.

Above all, as the politics of the region is based on the politics of personality, the role of the leadership among the political parties should be importantly taken into consideration. The leaders of the political parties should be fully aware of their members' role and activities within the party itself. For a state like Manipur where the ethnic tensions are increasingly higher, leaders should play a broader role with a common interest of the society as a whole without a sectarian feeling towards the different communities. In the state of Meghalaya which is marked of its historically strong traditional values of tribal democratic life, it will be worth noting that the political parties should understand the interest of the tribal people and insult a sense of modern democratic process where the people could have a voice of their own.

## APPENDIX. A

**Table of Chief Ministers and Governments of Manipur Since 1972.**

Sl. No.	Chief Minister	Government	Period	Remarks
1	Md. Alimuddin	MPP led ULP Ministry	20.03.1972-28.03.1973	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry formation
		President's Rule	28.03.1973-04.03.1974	
2	Md. Alimuddin	MPP led ULP Ministry	04.03.1974-10.07.1974	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ministry formation
3	Yangmaso Shaija	PDF Ministry	10.07.1974-06.12.1974	
4	R. K. Dorendro Singh	DLP Ministry	06.12.1974-23.07.1975	
5	R. K. Dorendro Singh	Congress-CPI Ministry	23.07.1975-15.05.1977	Emergency
		President's Rule	15.05.1977-29.06.1977	
6	Yangmaso Shaiza	Janata Party Ministry	29.06.1977-14.11.1979	
		President's Rule	14.11.1979-14.01.1980	
7	R. K. Dorendro Singh	Congress- MPP Ministry	14.01.1980-27.11.1980	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ministry Formation
8	Rishang Keishing	Congress Ministry	27.11.1980-28.02.1981	
		President's Rule	28.02.1981-19.06.1981	
9	Rishang Keishing	Congress Ministry	19.06.1981-04.01.1985	
10	Rishang Keishing	Congress Ministry	04.01.1985-04.03.1988	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry Formation
11	R. K. Jaichandra Singh	Congress Ministry	04.03.1985-23.02.1990	
12.	R. K. Ranbir Singh	ULF Ministry	23.02.1990-07.01.1992	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry Formtion

		President's Rule	07.01.1992-08.04.1992	
13.	R. K. Dorendro Singh	Congress Ministry	08.04.1992-31.12.1993	Dismissed on charges of bad law and order
		President's Rule	31.12.1993-13.12.1994	
14.	Rishang Keishing	Congress Ministry	13.12.1994-24.02.1995	
15.	Rishang Keishing	Congress Ministry	24.02.1995-16.12.1997	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry Formation
16.	W. Nipamacha Singh	MSCP led UF Ministry	16.12.1997-02.03.2000	Congress Split and 7 <sup>th</sup> SLA Election
17.	W. Nipamacha Singh	MSCP led UF Ministry	02.03.2000-14.02.2001	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry Formation
18.	Radhabinod Kojam	Samata led MDF Ministry	15.02.2001-02.06.2001	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ministry Formation
		President's Rule	02.06.2001-07.03.2002	Assembly under animated suspension was later dismissed on 07.09.2001
19.	O. Ibobi Singh	Congress Led Secular Progressive Front (SPF).	07.03.2002-till date	1 <sup>st</sup> Ministry Formation

Source: Manipur Research Forum Delhi(MRFD), *Bulletin*, Vol.2, Issue.2, March- Feb., 2002, New Delhi.

## APPENDIX: B

**Table for Shifting of Party Loyalty of the MLAs of 7<sup>th</sup> State Legislative Assembly before the 2002 Election, Manipur.**

No	Candidate	Constituency	Feb.2000	March 2000	Feb. 2000	May2001	Feb.2002
1.	K. Tomba Singh	Khundrakpam	MPP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(L)
2.	W. Thoiba Singh	Heingang	FPM	FPM	BJP	BJP	PM(L)
3.	N. Bihari Singh	Khurai	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(W)
4.	Vivekraj Wangkhem	Khetrigao	---	---	---	SAP	MSCP(W)
5.	Sapam Dhananjoy	Thongju	MSCP	MSCP	MSP	MSCP	NCP(L)
6.	H. Bidur	Keirao	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(L)
7.	S. Chndra	Andro	MPP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(W)
8.	Ksh. Biren	Lamlai	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(L)
9.	Radhabinod Koijam	Thangmeiband	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	SAP(L)
10.	P. Achou	Uripok	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(L)
11.	Kh. Loken	Sagolband	JD(S)	JD(S)	JD(L)	JD(L)	INC(L)
12.	L. Jayanta	Keisamthong	---	FPM	SAP	SAP	INC(L)
13.	H. Bhubon	Singjamei	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	NCP(L)
14.	R.K. Dorendro	Yaiskul	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP(W)
15.	H. Borbabu	Wangkhei	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP(L)
16.	Kh. Chandra	Sekamai	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	NCP(L)
17.	S. Rajen	Lamsang	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	FPM(L)
18.	H. Lokhon	Konthoujam	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP(L)
19.	L. Chandramani	Patsoi	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	FPM(L)
20.	O. Joy	Langthabal	MPP	MPP	MPP	MPP	MPP(W)
21.	W. Leima	Naoriya Pakhanglakpa	IND	IND	IND	IND	INC(W)
22.	W. Nipamaha	Wangoi	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MNC(L)
23.	Kh. Amutombi	Mayang Imphal	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	INC(L)
24.	Th. Bira	Nambol	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP(L)
25.	Y. Jiten	Oinam	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	MSCP(L)

26.	k. Govindas	Bishenpur	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	MSCP(W)
27.	L. Kerani	Moirang	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	MPP(L)
28.	H. Sanayaima	Thanga	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	NCP(L)
29.	S. Bira	Kumbi	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP(L)
30.	Md. Alauddin	Lilong	NCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	Not contested
31.	L. Tomba	Thoubal	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(W)
32.	Nimaichan L.	Wangkhem	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	MPP(W)
33.	M. Okendro	Heirol	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	INC(L)
34.	M. Hemanta	Wangjing Tentha	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	FPM(L)
35.	Laisram Jatra	Khangabok	MPP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	FPM(L)
36.	M. Manihar	Wabagai	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	MSCP(L)
37.	N. Nimai	Kakching	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	INC(L)
38.	M. Kunjo	Hiyanglam	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(L)
39.	K. Ranjit	Sugnu	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	INC(W)
40.	A. Biren	Jiribam	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MNC(L)
41.	Hangkhapao	Chandel	RJD	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	not contested
42.	O. Haokip	Tengnoupal	NCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	NCP(L)
43.	Rishang Keishing	Phungyar	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC(L)
44.	D. Shaiza	Ukhrul	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP(W)
45.	K. Ruivah	Chingai	FPM	FPM	FPM	FPM	PM(L)
46.	C. DOUNGEL	Saikul	NCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	NCP(W)
47.	L. Jonathan	Karong	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	SAP(L)
48.	Thorii	Mao	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	SAP(L)
49.	K. Raina	Tadubi	FPM	FPM	BJP	BJP	BJP(L)
50.	T. Kipgen	Kangpokpi	NCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(W)
51.	H. Kipgen	Saitu	FPM	FPM	SAP	SAP	SAP(L)
52.	Mangaibou	Tamei	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	INC(W)
53.	S. Jendai	Tamenglong	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	FPM(W)
54.	G. Kamei	Nungba	FPM	FPM	FPM	FPM	FPM(L)
55.	Ngursanlur	Tipaimukh	NCP	NCP	NCP	NCP	NCP(L)
56.	Songchinkhup	Thanlon	MSCP	MSCP	BJP	BJP	INC(W)
57.	Manga V.	Henglep	INC	INC	SAP	SAP	SAP(W)
58.	. Hangkhalian	Churchandpur	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	NCP(L)
59.	Chungkhosei	Saikot	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	NCP(L)
60.	N. Zatwan	Singhat	JD(U)	MSCP	MSCP	MSCP	FPM(L)

Source: Manipur Research Forum Delhi(MRFD), *Bulletin*, Vol.2, Issue.2, March- Feb., 2002, New Delhi. ( W indicates won while L with lost.).



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