

# Problems of Hill Areas In **North-East INDIA**

**Editor**

**GEORGE T. HAOKIP**



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North-East India is known simply for its ethnic conflict but one has to go beyond such simplistic interpretation and look their deeper causes. The region which is largely hilly areas is home to multi ethnic communities practising their unique customs and tradition. Today the region is faced with several problems such as ethnic crisis, identity assertion, interferences in tribal's custom, socio-economic and political problems of the people, land alienation, health problems besides others. These problems are definitely the successful factors for conflict situation in the region. A well plan initiative and the will to bring development while understanding and preserving the ethnic- tribal culture in the region is need of the hours. This book is an attempt to examine some of the crucial issues related with the problems of hill areas of North East to draw the attention of the policy maker of the country.

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# PROBLEMS OF HILL AREAS IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

*Editor*

George T. Haokip



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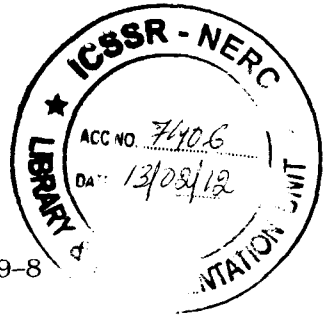
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*Problems of Hill Areas in North-East India*

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# POLITICAL PANDEMONIUM IN THE NORTH-EAST INDIA

*Empirical study in the hill areas of Manipur*

L. Muhindro Singh

*This paper has accentuated to highlight some factors that encourage unhealthy trends inside the Indian political system and its effect on the structure of democracy in the hill areas. Analysis is based on the prevailing state of affairs avail in North-East India exclusively Manipur on the eve of election. Attempt is also made to explore contemporary political chaos in the hill areas that appear as reflective consequence of various movements and territorial integrity of Manipur in particular. Most of the political elites have been taking greater advantage on such issues like Greater Nagalim and movement against AFSPA, and ethnic-politics. On the same, political elites of valley have used to build personal political career on territorial integrity issue. In fact both the issue became electoral weapon in politics. Eventually the paper in particular has been attempted to light the state of election in the remote and hill areas of Manipur where elections are very abnormal in the sense that threats and coercive power dominate the phenomena. On the other ethnic based civil societies are seemingly acting as authority that persuasion and dictate culture was aplenty. Taking the advantage of the brittle pre-electoral atmosphere politicians and protagonists have often been made allegation against*

*each other on the one hand and apathy of election has widely spread to the electorates on the other. Significantly, pro-separatist organisations were also underpinned on the particular dimension incorporating the situation.*

## ■ PRELUDE:

Elections in the remote hill areas are not free and fair. Most of the officials who engaged in the election in the hill areas opined that, 'they cannot perform the electoral norms what the election commission instructed due to various factors, of them secure life is most important, so conditionally they have to compromise in a manageable way'.<sup>1</sup> Besides, it is also general feeling that if one employee is bound to serve election duty in the hill area, first and foremost conception was "alternative means if possible'. This is due to the fact that the impact of the electoral trend in such area. Many political workers or protagonist in the particular polling area have often been acted as authority and committed different coercive activities in favour of particular candidate. Election officials and security forces seem to no power in such circumstances that they cannot interfere to the unfair means in election. Interestingly, so far, none of the electorates made complained in regards to their electoral right. It is true that government machineries in the hill areas cannot work properly as there is dual governance of state and non state actors. Most of the top brash officials posted here need to take comments from the non state actors for any works to be done. Various incidents and appearance of nexus with DCs of the districts with extra constitutional organisations, and dire consequence like killing, torture are the evidence. Indeed most of the electorates cannot do against the will of the underground group of its frontal organisation.

On the other, with the changing scenario of electoral behaviour, not only in the hill but also in the valley, most of the politicians turn into immoral and unethical politics. That most of the candidate has their own illicit forces and made various activities that spread psycho-fear amongst the electorates. With this view a remarkable statement made in the Manipur Legislative Assembly Session by MLA Ng. Kumarjit Singh of MPP that 'Politicians have to stop the culture of using youths by supplying armed ammunition

and harassing the people for some political benefit on the eve of election. Politics should be done sincerely and genuinely.<sup>2</sup>

### ■ RETROSPECTIVE INTROSPECTION:

Manipur, a hilly land of diverse culture of different ethnic communities, having 31 recognized and more than 15 non-recognized tribes, Meitei, Naga, Kuki, are the major communities. In fact the state was a land of peace so that many historians and political leaders christened different names when there was a sovereign kingdom. Indian policy of territorial expansion had influenced the then leaders of Manipur, later forcibly merged to Indian Union with effect from Oct 15, 1949. Since then, as a consequence of colonial policy of Indian government the state has been revolving into a land of wonders as 'conflict zone'. 'Jewels of India' and 'Kashmir of Eastern India' christened by Indian leaders to Manipur, perhaps a policy of Indianisation became a centre of experimentation for colonial laws. What the British government had been going on during the Indian freedom struggle 'divide and rule' policy to Indians is just implementing by Indian government to Manipur in particular and in North-Eastern states in general.

In Manipur, though the peoples have generally aware about Naga integration or South Nagalim movement after June uprising 2001, the integration movement is not new one is fact that it had already started just before Manipur got independence from British 1947. The feeling of Naga integration movement in Manipur was really influenced by the movement of Angami Nagas that happened in early 1879 at Naga Hill District where Angamese revolted and murdered Mr. Damant, Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hill District. Such movement was suppressed by Maharaj Chandrakirti, the then king of Manipur, accordingly requested by P.A. Cowley, Asst. Commissioner through Sir James Johnstone the British political agent at Imphal.

Many Naga social organizations and Naga militant groups claimed that they were never under any authority like British, India, and king of Manipur. But Naga Hill District later became Nagaland was created in 1879 by British India within the Assam. Further, Simon Commission when visited Kohima in 1929, a memorandum, signed by Nihu Angami and 19 other members of Kohima Club (a forum for interaction with British officials that established in 1881)

granted 'Excluded Area' tag to some areas of Nag a Hill District. In 1945, Kohima Club converted as Naga Hill District Council (NHDC) and later in 1946 as Naga National Council under the initiative of Angami Zapu Fizo. Such Naga movement in Nagaland influenced or impressed contiguous tribal areas of Manipur particularly Mao Sub-division of Manipur North District. In Manipur, gradual influence from outside neighboring Naga state had mould up Mao Naga people. Actually the feeling of separation of Mao area or to integrate to Nagaland germinated after Briti-b colonial rule in Manipur-3ftef- 1891 and the influence of British when they aware of leaving Manipur. Athiko Daiho, a Mao Naga leader (member Manipur constitution drafting committee and later minister of finance during Territorial council 1963 and also elected as an MLA from Karong AC in 1972, 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly election after statehood) was the pioneer of this Naga integration movement in Manipur.

During 1945/46 Manipur was politically turning point when many leaders of different poli6caJ party knew the confirmation of British to be given freedom as previous kingdom. Many leaders had wanted to form democratic country and some to make constitutional monarchy. Different political parties like Praja Samelini, Praja Mandal and Manipur State Congress demanded to establish Legislative Assembly. On Nov. 20, 1946, Maharaja Bodhachandra declared to form Constitution Making Committee by representing 21 members of Hill and Valley people. Later, Manipur State Durbar was dissolved on July 1, 1947, and established Manipur State Council on the same day. (Khamba 2002: 55) By 1946 there were some voices from the Nagas in the Mao area of Manipur for the secession of Naga inhabited areas from the state, though not from India. A memorandum was submitted to the Governor of Assam by the Khullakpas and elders of the Mao Nagas in June, 1946. In which they said their 'people would be humiliated if the British officers make them to step in Manipur state and their administration *is* put directly under the Manipur state Durbar'. They also asserted that except for 'occasional inroads of the Manipuries in very limited Hill villages, the Manipuri Maharaja had never subjugated the Hill villages in pre-British days' and that they 'were quite independent'. So they requested the Governor 'to make their hills a directly British controlled territory as the other neighboring hill districts with whom they share common customs, traditions, social organizations etc'.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, in 1947, under the leadership of Angami Zapu Fizo Naga National Council had emerged and demanded independent Nagaland for Naga inhabited areas of Tuensang from Arunachal and Mao from Manipur. It might be his believed that there may not be strong impact on Manipur without any involvement of Naga people of Manipur and Arunachal, later he had joint hand with Athiko Daiho a Mao Naga leader of Manipur. (Ibobi 2005: 2)

At the outset, during the drafting of Manipur constitution, a Mao Naga leader as well as member of drafting committee, A. Daiho strongly argued that the Hill Tribes should have the right of succession from the state after five years. His proposal was rejected. (Gangumei 2003: 36) Another major step towards Naga unification, A. Daiho circulated a document on September 1948, 'to a select circle of influential leaders' which deals with future Naga situation in view of the approaching British departure. He explained his contention from many points of view. Historically Manipur hills had probably been taken under state administration since or immediately after 1891 and that though 'there might be irregular and occasional inroads of the Manipuri kings' forces in the Bills or its ways to Dimapur, Si1char or Burma and might possibly have spoils taken from the surrounding villages of the paths'. The Hills were 'not formally conquered and no regular levy or tribute was paid by the Hills to the then king of Manipur.'<sup>4</sup> About the then Hill administration he said, 'Hills cadre is separate from that of the state proper Valley. The Hill administration is run by the President of Manipur state Durbar. So generally speaking Hills matters do not come under the state Durbar as a whole'. From the political point of view also he said that though the Hills comprised 7/8 of the total area of the state, its inhabitants will always be a minority in Manipur as their population comprised roughly 2/5 of the whole population. This problem, he insisted was 'created' by accidental political distribution of boundaries at the advent of the British. (Ibid) He further express his fear that if the Hills of the Manipur forms a part of Manipur state, they would be in an inferior position socially amongst the 'more educated and civilized' Hindu.

Therefore, he wanted the 'British officers of the Hills who are acquainted with Hill opinions' to decide the Hills' future or that a 'plebiscite of Hill men be summoned on elected or nominated representative basis of one man in every 1000 people and decide.' (Ibid) Thus what he desired was either (I) a federated Hills formed

by 'Lushai Hill, Somra tract, Chin Hills and Naga Hills etc'. or (II) That the Hills of Manipur 'be formed into a separate districts by itself directly under the provincial control' or (III) That the different parts of the Hills may be disintegrated and join with Naga Hills and North-Cachar Hills, Lushai Hills, Chin Hills and Somra Tract according to convenience. (Ibid)

Closely followed to their demand for secession of Naga inhabited areas of Manipur were two different trends of attitude amongst the Nagas, more or less facing one another as opponents and trying to dominate each other. One was represented by the Naga Chiefs and their allies who had not change their traditional values and outlook. On the other hand the other trend was represented by the educated Christian Nagas who had no root in the past and were actually conscious of the then changing situation. They were driven by their circumstances 'formed a united front of the Hills only to find that the past was not, and couldn't be, completely dead after all.' (Ibid)

The educated Christian Nagas decided not to join the Interim Council of Manipur. It seems that there was a provision in the draft of Manipur state constitution Act 1947, not yet approved then, for the 'Right of freedom of action' after five years which according to them, implied the right to secession from Manipur as well as from India.<sup>5</sup> And as this was ultimately removed they decided not to join the Interim Council. Thus this group was clearly for secession of Naga areas of Manipur from the state as well as from India. On Aug 14, 1947 some Nagas in Kohima had declared that 'Southern Nagas including Manipur Hill Nagas and Cachar Nagas independent today the Aug. 14, 1947' and that they were 'negotiating to join Pakistan Dominion on suitable terms.'<sup>6</sup>

A meeting of 'Manipur Hills Special Conference' was held at Imphal on Aug. 14, 1947. It demanded that since India is free to stand on its own legs all parts of it must be allowed to run the Government by the very people of the localities. But it did not mentioned secession either from Manipur or India.<sup>7</sup> Another significant development at this stage was that of the NNC at Kohima trying to interfere in the Naga problem in Manipur. Having closely observed the situation in Manipur, the president of NNC wrote to the Maharaja of Manipur. (Ibid) 'The political upheaval of the Hill people in your state has attracted the keenest interest and close attention of the Naga National Council. Surely the National Council

attaches very great importance to the fact that, though no fault of ours, that 'upheaval' has directly touched the root of our National Council. As hill men we have interest in them; as neighbor, we are equally interested in your people and your state. Naturally, as a freedom fighting organization the NNC observes, with great sympathy, all the freedom fighting forces.' (Ibid)

Hailing the development as 'a natural corollary of national consciousness and their right to secession as a 'reasonable demand' he expressed his belief that Maharaja would loss no time in granting the demand there by paving the way of good will between the Hills and Valley and also the state and the NNC as a whole.' (Ibid) In relating to this Maharaja asked the Chief Minister to take urgent action but the Chief Minister replied, 'this Council has not been recognized by the state and is not of the state. No action need be taken.' (Mangi: 346) Such deed of authority had shocked A. Daiho and has retraced his stand of secession from India. In a resolution of Naga National League under the president ship of A. Daiho, it was stated that the organization shall primarily speak on behalf of the Nagas of Manipur but pledged itself to stand together with other hill tribes in the state as well as outside it in order to demand self determination of the Hill peoples in general without in any way injuring the general interests of Assam or India.<sup>8</sup> The main idea of League was the unity of all the Naga Tribes as well as the Non-Naga Tribes of the state and stood for working out their future according to the inclination, wishes and aspirations of the respective tribes. It also said that it would strive 'its utmost to bring together under one district administration the different scattered, allied tribes who happen to be in different districts of Assam but contiguous in area.' (Ibid) The term 'Self determination' mentioned in the resolution was defined as 'consolidation of tribes of the same stock under the district administration in order to facilitate working of the future of that tribe who happen to be scatter living under different districts but contiguous in area.' (Ibid)

Another memorandum was also submitted to the Sardar Patel, the then Dy. Prime Minister of India on Jan 24, 1948 by A. Daiho & N. Modoli of NNL along with some Mao Naga Chiefs and Headmen. In which, they said that the conservation, 'of their culture, tradition customary right, usages and political practices' would not be possible if the Naga people and their contiguous geography were place under different influences and policies. (Mangi op cit:

349) Therefore they insisted that 'on the basis of linguistic provinces and consolidation of the same stock of people' the Nagas of the different areas but contiguous in geography should be consolidated under one administrative unit and that nothing sort of this just demand would be acceptable to the Nagas of Manipur. (Ibid) It also proposed a referendum to ascertain the wishes of the people.

As no positive response was received from the Government of India and Govt. of Manipur as well, 'Provisional Government' was set up in order to stem various agitations. And as first pressuring strategy, no house tax campaign was started. In the following month A Daiho himself claimed as self style leader of Mao and didn't pay taxes to the state government instead collected by him (*Shillong Time: Sep. 3, 1948*). His followers indulged in the unlawful and subversive activities by way of violating state rules. They forcibly broke through the Mao Gate and allow Lorries full of potato to cross that state gate without paying duties, even roped state police on nearby trees and inhumanly tortured them. (Ibid)

On March 9, 1948 a memorandum submitted to Minister of states Govt. of India by A Daiho. Insisting that the movement was 'not at all communal, but broadly based on linguistic provinces of India', they wanted to secure their 'due rights and liberties within free India as a freedom loving people'. Further Secy. of NNL, K. Sashipri sent a letter to the Secretary, Ministry of state, New Delhi expressing that, A. Daiho may enter into agreement with the Govt. of India on behalf of the Mao and other allied Nagas of Manipur in connection with their right to self determination. A warrant to arrest A. Daiho was released on Aug. 26, 1948 by Chief Minister of Manipur MK. Priyobarta when Daiho had refused to appear on the Hill Bench of Manipur. As a consequence, authority had rushed to arrest Daiho, war-cries were also heard immediately after their arrival with the crowd gesticulating and shouting anti-state slogans saying that they didn't recognize the state authority and would resist by violence any attempt to arrest Daiho. An attempt to peacefully surrender Daiho, failed as the mob didn't allow the authority to pass through the barricades they had built. After repeated warning Assam Rifles forced and pushing the crowd with Lathis (stick) but were pushed back by the unruly crowd. After some of 50 minutes later mob became very tense, as soon as police confirmed some unlicensed arms were to be used by the followers of Daiho from the nearby jungle, ultimately Assam Rifles fired on

the mob and resulted two deaths and two were wounded. Later, Daiho along with Medoli and Loili arrested in the spot, by seeing the situation to become they were kept in the Calcutta jail. (Mangi: op cit: 350) Their arrest had greatly demoralized their followers. For the time being (1946-1948) all the people faced another problem of the state that of historic question of the merger Manipur to Indian union. Thus the first movement for the Naga Integration or secession of Naga inhabited areas from Manipur was diverted at a while by Merger Agreement 1949.

### ■ DIALOGUE AND TURNING POINT:

Different hill base insurgent groups of either one or other group have been boycotted election in the hill areas. Significantly while one particular insurgent group boycotted the election most of the insurgent groups neither support nor oppose. But changes were appeared since some important outfit operated in the hill areas like NSCN-IM and NSCN-K enter to the peace process with the government of India, on the other Kuki National Front KNF enter to the suspension of operation with the state government. Though the people have certain free from fear the election is still not free from violation of electoral right in the sense that 'dictate' culture is widely spread to support particular candidate. So the freedom of the electorate to choose their representative was no more there. The detail analysis on the context of threat and coercive power of local gunda or leaders of civil organisation can be seen on the eve of election. In protest to such violation or command of the armed groups to support the particular candidate many womenfolk organised rally in the Chandel District on the pre poll. In fact poll percentage of the election was so high unexpectedly even the actual physical appearance of electorates was very meagre. Besides, even minor child caste vote, shown in the newspaper report.

Gradually, as a new strategy, NSCN-IM enters into the state politics, directly or indirectly, condemning New Delhi's delaying tactics. NSCN-IM's possible entry into state politics could be exactly towing the line of what Government of India would like it to do. Compared to NSCN-IM's earlier stand of boycotting and banning elections in the hill districts prior to ceasefire agreement, the state election of 2002 marks its taking a significant role in electoral politics, e.g. backing specific candidates. This was done to strengthen the peace process and also achieve some political points

for negotiation. Through UNC consolidation of Naga politicians supporting "integration" was initiated. On the eve of the election, the Naga candidates had taken 'undertaking' as oath to contribute to the Naga consolidation and integration movement. Thus, the Naga problem has become a major political issue for the entire state.

To highlight the last state election 2002, UNC gave instructions to the Naga candidates not to contest election on any political party but to go as Independent candidate. UNC only supported those Naga candidates who would work for Naga unification, often evoking fear of God on defiance of the church. In total 11 Naga MLAs won the election. However, in the name of pursuing the Naga agenda, they all joined Congress. Though they assured on working for Naga unification, they have in actuality towed the line provided by the party high command.

As usual did in the last election 2002 UNC have already declared proposed instructions to be followed by Naga candidates and warned not to contest election on any political party instead Independent. And searching for Naga candidate those who loyal to them and have strong support on Naga Unification and fear of God. Out of 11 elected Naga MLAs in the last election from different party have out of expectation on their nature of work for Nagas as a factor of party line that they joint ruling Congress. Most of the Naga candidates who had assured on the undertakings did not do much on the purpose. Besides, Naga MLAs have searched the way to divert or defer their commitments on the basis of what the party high command may do if they do. By seeing such endless political commitments like no full stop in the politics, UNC instructed all the Naga candidate aspirants not to be candidate of National party for the 9<sup>th</sup> State Assembly election 2007. Moreover they strongly condemned the ruling Congress high command's attitude of delaying tactics. On the other side in the valley none the Congress all the parties put up Naga issue and several changes appearing in the state politics. Regional combined force / resurgent Manipur People's Party (MPP) and other party targeting ruling Congress as a result of its past records and resent signatory issue of Congress Naga MLAs and MPs.

Six of the winning independents were backed by the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of the Nagas of Manipur. The 11 Naga-dominated constituencies of the State are spread in the four hill districts of Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel.

Six of these were won by independent candidates backed by the UNC. However, in the remaining five seats, UNC-sponsored candidates were defeated. The verdict comes against the background of a UNC diktat to candidates who did not have its backing to withdraw from the contest in favour of consensus candidates. The Congress won in only two of these 11 Naga-inhabited seats, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Gaikhangam retaining the Nungba constituency in Tamenglong district and D.D Thaisi winning the Karong seat in Senapati District.

The UNC shortlisted 11 independent candidates from among 61, who signed a pledge before the apex Naga body on January 16 to take up the cause of Naga integration in the Assembly. Naga representatives who signed a similar pledge in 2002 failed to perform their duty of working for the 'Naga cause' and raise the issue on the floor of the House after they were elected. (Ibid) In Ukhrul district, the UNC made a 'sweep' the candidates it backed won all the three seats of the Naga-dominated hill district, which is also the home district of Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaac-Muivah), or NSCN-IM. In Tamenglong district, however, Khangthunanang Panmei, an independent candidate who was abducted by NSCN-IM cadre days before the third phase of the polling and was literally forced to announce his withdrawal from the contest, won by a margin of 8,46 votes from the Tamenglong Assembly constituency, defeating the UNC-sponsored candidate and sitting MLA Samuel Jendai. (Ibid) The UNC's agenda of Naga integration made the issue of Manipur's territorial integrity an important one in popular perception. The State's territorial boundary seemed to be at stake with the prospect of representatives backed by the UNC raising the issue in the Assembly. All the parties, including the Congress, made Manipur's territorial integrity a major poll plank. The verdict showed that the electorate in the valley saw the Congress as the only party that could take on the apex Naga body.

As a new strategy NSCN-IM has gradually enter in the state politics directly or indirectly by condemning Delhi's delaying tactics. On the other hand GOI have golden opportunity when they (IM) arrive in state politics in one sense. Though earlier they had outside the electoral politics and banned in the hill districts before the ceasefire dialogue, since 2002 state election taking into consider as another way to strengthen their peace process. Through UNC,

all the Naga politicians seem to be within their command may be said. On the eve of election they have taken "Undertaking" as oath to do for the Naga movement from the entire Naga candidates. The Naga issue became one of the significant as well as handy issues of every political party side by side in hill and valley. Political parties and politicians in the valley politics with Naga issue as an essential weapon. Actually politicians may not be wanted to resolve Naga issue and Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) 1958 as these are the main issue of election.

As usual did in the last election 2002 UNC have already declared proposed instructions to be followed by Naga candidates and warned not to contest election on any political party instead Independent. And searching for Naga candidate those who loyal to them and have strong support on Naga Unification and fear of God. 11 elected Naga MLAs in the last election from different party had out of expectation on their nature of deliberation for Naga cause as they joined ruling Congress. Most of the Naga candidates who assured on the undertakings did not do much on the purpose. Besides, Naga MLAs have searched the way to divert or defer their commitments on the basis of what the party high command may do if they do. By seeing such endless political commitments like no full stop in the politics, UNC instructed all the Naga candidate aspirants not to be candidate of National party or regional party for the 9<sup>th</sup> state assembly election 2007. Moreover they strongly condemned the ruling Congress high command's attitude of delaying tactics 'wait and watch'. On the other side in the valley none the Congress all the parties put up Naga issue and several changes appearing in the state politics. Regional combined force / resurgent MPP and other party targeting ruling Congress as a result of its past records and recent signatory issue of Congress Naga MLAs and MPs that submitted a memorandum to PM of India showing their support to Naga unification.

Coincidentally, as impact of the cease-fire, several Naga and Kuki organizations today strongly opposed the extension of Centre-NSCN-IM ceasefire to Manipur describing it as an attempt to divide the people of the hills and valley in the State. Demanding immediate retraction of ceasefire from Manipur, Kakhulong Youth Committee and Kakhulong Womens Society (two Naga organizations) in a joint statement said the ceasefire was an attempt to drive a wedge between people in the hills and valley. It said no amount of attempt

to create a gap between the two people who had been living side by side since time immemorial would succeed in separating the two and demanded immediate withdrawal of the ceasefire.<sup>9</sup>

Several other Naga organizations including, Major Khul Young Association, Dimdimdajang Kabui Khul, Khoupum Kabui Group, etc said in separate statements that nobody could alter the relations between plain and hill people in Manipur and demanded immediate withdrawal of ceasefire from the State. The secretary of the Major Khul Young Association Kh. Golmei also condemned the killings of 13 persons and added that the association would support all democratic movements against ceasefire. We will protect the territorial integrity of Manipur, said the Naga Associations secretary. The Manipuri Nepali Women's Association in a statement strongly condemned the killings and opposed the extension of ceasefire to Manipur. (Ibid)

Another effect may be implementation of electoral process somewhat freely in the Hill areas. Naga militants have resisted election process in the Hill districts before peace process was made but one militant organization of Kuki banned Kuki communities not to participate in the parliamentary election 2004. When Naga militants imposed restriction on election Naga candidates and electorates couldn't exercised their franchise freely, but only those Nagas who believed on democratic process join the fray and succeed. Such handicaps on the government, was removed as IM cadres involve in the election process, indeed free and fair election in the Hill is not yet coming.

In the present context, from the last assembly election 2002 Naga organization particularly sympathizer groups have been involved directly in the election. That United Naga Council has been projecting to elect only the Naga candidates who favour Naga integration. Interestingly, such a democratic country where freedom is provided in the constitution UNC directed instructions on the Naga candidates and electorates. As a result of this, Naga MLAs have faced several threats and warned to resign from the Assembly in the last term. As they have taken undertaking, most of the Naga representatives kept mum while taking resolutions regarding state integrity in the Assembly. To keep their promise on the one side and as strategy for next election on the other all the Naga MPs and MLAs have submitted a memorandum to the PM expressing their

support on the Naga unification under a political entity. Perhaps it may be another political strategy to woo Naga electorates.

Another important effect may be interference on freedom of thought particularly in the hill Naga tribes. Signing undertaking as oath in the last Assembly election, threaten to resign from the Assembly and political party, instructions on the Naga candidates to be followed accordingly, are cleared against freedom of thought. Such kind of declaration and undertaking on the given format UNC has mentioned to support only the Independent candidate nominated by them as consensus. Besides after election all the elected MLAs should resign at any time when they say to do so. In fact such deed violates people's right and stand against the democracy. Moreover, NSCN-IM declared all the Naga candidates not to contest election on any political parties, instead as Independent candidate. Some Naga MLAs subsequently resigned from the party and Assembly expressing their support on the peace process in this very near election. How far they have sincere is questioning as they have resigned when they have no time to do anything as MLA. Though NSCN-IM warned, many seating MLAs are contesting from the Congress including MPCC president Gaikhangam. Even at the time when IM restriction on election was imposed in the hill, many Naga candidates have succeeded. On the contrary, some seating Naga MLAs demanding central leaders not to interfere NSCN-IM in the election suggesting that it may be disturbed on the peace process. On the other hand, such impression has spread in the valley too; commands in the peace process in the hill. Nevertheless, Congress party claimed state integrity can be protected only by them that it has its organizational units throughout state representing all the communities, and charging regional party MPP is only for valley that has no organizational units in the Mao and other hill areas. Though different parties join the fray the main contestant of the 9<sup>th</sup> assembly election was between Congress and MPP in the valley and candidates support by UNC and Congress in the hill. UNC and NSCN-IM planned to elect Maximum Naga candidate who loyal to them out of 19 reserve seats in the hill areas. Though MPP has its organizational units in most of the hill areas except Mao constituency in the last terms, MPP could not able to put up any candidate in the Naga dominated hill areas but some candidate contested from Kuki dominated area that is Chandel and Churachandpur districts while Congress party

contested in all 60 constituencies. These are strategic outcome base on Naga movement.

As a matter to strengthen Naga movement various strategies have been staged under the aegis of UNC. To elect only those Naga having strong will on Naga unification and fear of God, UNC declared position paper for coming election instructing to be followed by candidates after electing. And UNC advised to Naga organizations, Naga Hoho and Khullakpas to support only the candidate support by UNC. With the changing political scenario in the hill, regional parties like FMP (Federal Party of Manipur), DRPP (Democratic Revolutionary Peoples' Party) and MPP (Manipur Peoples' Party) folded within the MPP as unified force. It is a proto-type culture reflects from hill politics but whether it may be right or wrong such regional parties unification is a product of some elements (militant outfit) claimed by Congress party. Nevertheless such changing political culture is a kind of reaction for Naga movement as well as NSCN-IM involvement in the election.

Since 2002 electioneering practice in both the hill and the valley has certain unusual dynamics which is mainly due to ceasefire extension in the territory of Manipur. A sharp deviation is seen that the protagonist UNC had executed various strategies to put up only the Naga candidate who have intention to fight for Naga Cause on the floor of the Assembly that implies extension of cease fire to Manipur, eventually to the Naga unification. On the vise-versa, in the valley, all the political parties and people as well wanted to put up those representatives who love the territorial integrity of the state. Thus most of the parties considered the territorial integrity issue as vital political agenda to influence voting behaviour. This is due to the fact that regional parties that sought strong voice for the protection of territorial integrity has no expectation from the Naga dominated constituencies of hill districts.

#### ■ PREDICAMENT OF THE FRANCHISE:

Human rights violation on the eve of elections appeared in the state but the quantification of such cases that found in the hill areas have certain deviation from the valley though the scenario of human rights question on election due to armed conflict, seem to be same. Power politics and gun-culture has definitely high in the election

since 2002. With the coming of UNC in the electoral politics in the hill areas, many observers opined different perspective but the activities of the UNC has indirect implication the question of freedom of thought and conscience for many electorates and candidate. In various phases of election they issued coercive instructions to the electorates and candidate with the perspective of Naga unification to support only the candidate they nominated, and the nature of nomination was also undemocratic that seem to curtailed rights to be candidature alleged by many Naga aspirant candidates. On the other direction to support a particular candidate is in fact violation of freedom to choose their representatives that hardly affect to the electoral rights.

### ■ THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2002: CASE STUDY:

With the cause of Naga integration and ceasefire extension in the state political uncertainty were there where politicians are targeted by the civil societies that brought June 18 incident; a new political chapter had been established in Manipur. As the elections were to be held at a time when the minds of the public were still unsettled, no worthwhile chance was likely to be brought.<sup>10</sup> In a development predicted to have wide implications on the forthcoming elections 2002 and after, a meeting organized by United Naga Council, UNC at its headquarters at Senapati, where in the meeting 47 (later increased by 51) Naga aspirant candidates signed a pledge that in the event of their return to the 8<sup>th</sup> Manipur Legislative Assembly, they would support the Naga cause.<sup>11</sup> It is worth to mention that Naga cause include Naga unification of all the Naga inhabited areas. The joint pledge among others said the 'Naga MLAs once elected would raise the issue of Naga political problems in forum including the Manipur Legislative Assembly. It also said all Naga MLAs would be compelled to fight and campaign unitedly on issues concerning the problems of the Nagas, and those MLAs who turn back on the pledge signed today would have to willingly face the ire of the Naga people. The pledge further said all Naga candidates must consider the Naga issue above their party manifestos.'(Ibid) The question is that how the Naga candidate will serve for a particular community that almost all the constituencies where they have to nominate constitute different communities like Kuki, Nepali and other tribes. If they do so they may not be considered as

representative of the concerned constituencies. On the other such pledge will affect to the electoral rights of the other community though they have chance to choose alternate candidate on the fray. On the other, more or less pledge for particular purpose to support the communal agenda may affect the election code of conduct and also be simply moral duty of the aspirant candidate in the sense that if the candidate returns to the Assembly no legal action may be initiated by the UNC. Thus it is in fact a political gimmick to woo Naga electorates who loyal to the concept of Naga unification. Significantly, vice president of Federal Party of Manipur (FPM) Gangumei Kamei who pledged the declaration published their manifesto mentioning with regard to unity and integrity of Manipur, the FPM stands for the common destiny of the people of Manipur and added that Manipur has been home to a number of communities for ages. FPM will stand for the protection of this unity, pledged the manifesto. (Sangai (2)9: 2002) Mention may be made that UNC announced that it neither supports nor opposes any particular political party in the forthcoming Manipur Assembly elections, but insisted that the elected Naga MLAs must firmly abide by the declaration signed at Senapati. (Imphal (2)9: 2002)

With this views critical analysis were found from various quarters, of them, The Democratic Peoples' Party, DPP, has come out strongly against the 47 Naga candidates who are reported to have signed a pact at Senapati to fight for the Naga political cause including the peace talks between the government of India and the NSCN (IM) once elected to the Manipur Legislative Assembly. The DPP was particularly harsh on the Federal Party of Manipur leader, Gangmumei Kamei who had not only attended the Senapati meeting but also appended his name to the pact that reportedly questioned the integrity of Manipur. (Imphal (2)9: 2002a) Party general secretary R. K Anand while terming the Senapati Conclave as immature and childish said the organization which initiated the declaration lacks "ethnic balance".<sup>12</sup> BJP leader and Union Minister of State for Home ID Swami today stated that fitting action will be taken up against party candidates if they were found to have signed the Senapati declaration. Reiterated that action deemed fit by the party will be taken up if the candidates were found to have signed the declaration. (Sangai (2)10: 2002)

The Kuki Inpi, Manipur, KIM, had expressed strong concern over the Senapati declaration signed by Naga candidates pledging to support the 'Naga cause' at the behest of the UNC. The KIM president, P. Gangte, in a statement issued said the UNC is gathering dark clouds of tension by forging the 'forced-signed' declaration warning that it will have far reaching consequences to destabilize the already disturbed social harmony of the pluralistic society of Manipur.<sup>13</sup> Such an attempt to create a captive group of legislators and dictate terms with no free political conscience is not only undemocratic but also unchristian. It said that the UNC's 'selfish and ego-centric' policy focusing only on the 'Naga cause' cannot be merged in the kaleidoscopic pluralistic society. Stating that in a pluralistic society, give and take policy is not only democratic but also in tune with all religious beliefs, the statement said if the UNC desires peace, it can capitalize on the already available good offices of other people and organizations. (Ibid)

With the following dictate of UNC, Ukhrul district became first threshold of entering the poll on February 21 pandemonium prevails with the candidates in the fray and their agents on a blitzkrieg of propaganda, claiming to have the blessings of the NSCN-IM. Even as the NSCN-IM has refuted the claim, people were confused. Doing much damage at the moment was the lingering propaganda spree that some candidates were banned from contesting the election by the NSCN-IM. (Imphal (2)11: 2002) However, candidates had also refuted such claim as a ploy to jeopardize their prospects and said that they have been placed under undue disadvantages by such propaganda mongers. They also alleged that some armed persons pretending to be on the order of NSCN-IM were on the loose and campaigning on the sly favouring some particular candidates. Interestingly, a pamphlet appeared, implicitly supporting the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his government as the only competent authority to tackle the Indo-Naga issue. Sonia Gandhi and her family are branded as denying the Nagas of their "birth rights" to freedom. (Ibid) The public has objected to the publication of the pamphlet as malicious, misleading and done with ulterior motive.

Besides, the major issue on the agenda of the people was the extension of the cease-fire in Manipur Naga areas that would decide the fate of the forthcoming 8<sup>th</sup> Manipur Legislative Assembly election. However, with every candidate giving their own glib

rhetoric, political equation was taking its own course based on money power, manpower and loyalty to some extent. Every camp is holding their feast and there's tea aplenty at very regular intervals.

On the other hand, a group calling itself Naga Youth Ceasefire Support Group, Ukhrul unit (NYCSG) with anonymous members has emerged overnight, self-proclaiming that for speedy solution to the Indo-Naga issue, the group was formed as a result of 'awakening' of the youth, supporting the BJP government, People are however, skeptical questioning as to why the NYCSG has sprung up just on the eve of the Assembly election. The argument was the talk is not with any political party but with the government of India. In the meantime, the chief administrative officer (CAO) Captain HA Ningshen of the NSCN-IM, Wung Tangkhul Region (WTR) convened a meeting on Feb. 10, 2002 with leaders of all the Tangkhul social & religious organizations categorically stating that the NSCN-IM does neither support nor ban any candidate from contesting the election. However he expressed strong reservation in the case of Rishang Keishang and those candidates in league with him as conspiring to derail the peace process by collaborating with anti-Naga elements just for the love of the CM's chair. He also clarified that Rishang and his companies are not banned from contesting the election but that people should not vote for them. (Ibid) Thus, many observers felt that electorates may have psycho-fear to cast their vote as well as the election may not be free and fair. On the other the statement of the NSCN-IM could not give confidence to the people as in the various incidents reported the involvement of NSCN-IM in the electoral politics as well as UNC acted with the support of them.

It may also be mentioned that the then president of the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee, MPCC, O. Ibobi Singh, has charged that his party's candidates in Chandel and Tengnoupal Assembly constituencies were forced to withdraw their nomination papers under duress from the underground NSCN-IM. (Imphal (2)3: 2002) Addressing media persons at the first of the 'meet the press programmes' organized by the All Manipur Working Journalists Union, AMWJU, Ibobi said that the two candidates, L. Benjamin and Morung Makunga, were detained and forced to withdraw their nomination papers by cadres of the NSCN -IM. Ibobi disclosed that a written complaint has been made in this

connection to the Election Commission of India, on January 31, 2002, asking for a repeat of the entire poll exercise in the two constituencies, allowing filing of fresh nomination papers. (Ibid) He added that permission has been sought from the Congress high command to initiate appropriate legal action if no action is forthcoming from the ECI. Ibobi said the two candidates were summoned to Dimapur (Nagaland) by the underground outfit and forced to withdraw their candidature under duress. The rights of a citizen to contest in elections have been forcibly taken away, he charged. He reiterated the coercive action of the underground outfit in forcing the withdrawal of the two candidates to a communal political vision. (Ibid) This case is quite evidence for the violation of electoral rights in the hill districts of Manipur that doesn't claim such activities are not found in the valley but the dimension is quite different.

In another incident of human rights violation on the eve of election in the hill area may be worth to mention the interference of underground elements in electioneering in the hill districts for the second phase of the Assembly elections, particularly in Tamenglong, Senapati and Ukhrul districts, have evoked considerable apprehension among the public in general and electorate and candidates in particular. Instructions issued by a particular underground organization, which has disavowed all interest in Indian elections to the village authorities of various villages in these three districts, warning against voting for candidates who had opposed the extension of the NSCN-IM ceasefire to Manipur had cast a shadow over campaigning. (Imphal (2)19: 2002)

One such circular was reportedly issued to villages in the Noney and Haochong area in Tamenglong district by the operation commander of the Government of Peoples Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) on January 3, 2002 warning Naga civilians against extending support to or voting for candidates who had opposed the extension of the ceasefire to Manipur. (Ibid) On the other hand, the central administrative officer, Zeliangrong region, GPRN, had issued an order on January 26, 2002 directing national party workers to refrain from participation and involvement in the Manipur Assembly Elections directly or indirectly which threatens the commitment of the GPRN. The order had warned that stern action would be taken against defaulters. (Ibid)

In the pre-poll concept for the Assembly election 2002, have three Assembly constituencies Tamenglong district - Tamei, Tamenglong and Nungba, a total electorate of 62,900 and altogether 10 candidates in the fray. In Tamei, the contest was shaping up to be a close one between Z Mangaibou of the INC and Athuan Abonmei of the BJP. Mangaibou defeated Abonmei by about 5000 votes in the last elections, but the latter, it is believed, may be able to close the gap. In Tamenglong A/c, the main fight was expected to be between Khathuanang Pamei of the Congress and Samuel Jendai of the Federal Party of Manipur. Jendai had defeated Pamei by around 3000 votes in the last elections. FPM strongman Prof Gangmumei Kamei is facing off once again INC Gaikhangam in Nungba A/c.

Ukhrul district, with three Assembly constituencies Phungyar, Chingai and Ukhrul, has a total electorate of 84288, and a total of 17 candidates in the fray. 43-Phungyar A/c remains the stronghold of Manipur's longest serving chief minister, Rishang Keishing, still representing the INC, but he has to face a stiff challenge from Wungnaoshang Keishing of the MSCP. K Somi of the FPM, N Solomon of the BJP and Samata candidate Stephen Angkang had also built up strength in some pockets. It is learnt from various news that some underground elements were campaigning actively against Rishang. In Ukhrul A/c, BJP representative Danny Shaiza, son of former chief minister Yangmasho Shaiza faces former MLA AS Arthur. Shaiza defeated Arthur by over 6000 votes in the last elections. In Chingai A/c, the FPM Dr Kasim Ruivah has to retain his seat against challenges from RN Chihanpam of the BJP, and David NK Shimray of the Samata Party.

With the second phase polls, on February 21 in the hill areas question of human rights being concerned in all forms in the election and the stakes obviously high, Ukhrul district, which has three Assembly constituencies, saw sporadic acts of violence and a string of abduction purportedly carried out by armed persons who identified themselves as NSCN-IM cadres. (Sangai (2) 20: 2002) One interesting pattern in the string of abduction and violence is BJP candidates and their supporters and workers are left untouched so far, perhaps peace talk was with the BJP led coalition government National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the centre. It is reported in the newspapers, six active Congress (I) workers and the son of the INC candidate in Ukhrul AC, AS Arthur were abducted by armed persons on February 17 and released the next day. The Congress

workers who were abducted included, Ng Ngalengai, president of District Congress Committee, S. Zingthan, chief agent of the Congress candidate AS Arthur, P. Ningkhalen and Ng. Dickson.(Ibid)

They were reportedly picked up from Ukhrul. Arthur's son Wungthingthing was also abducted by armed persons from Nungshong Lamkhai. All were released the next day and firmly warned not to campaign for the Congress candidate. A Jeep used by the candidate's son was pushed down a deep ravine. Armed persons also hijacked a car of the candidate's son and later pushed it down a steep ravine at a place in between Lunghar and Nungbi under Shangshak police station. A Gypsy and a Maruti car of the Congress candidate in Ukhrul constituency were also pushed down the ravine at Lunghar village by armed persons on February 18.(Ibid) Earlier armed persons stopped a Jeep belonging to the Chingai Congress (I) candidate at Tolloi and after ordering the workers to get down destroyed the vehicle. A Jeep belonging to the FPM candidate of Chingai was also destroyed by armed persons.

More or less election in the hill areas was not free and fair that many cases were past silently but the MPP has demanded that re-poll be conducted in all the polling centres in 41 Chandel Assembly constituency alleging widespread booth capturing and proxy voting by armed supporters of the BJP candidate a day ahead of the actual casting of votes. (Sangai (2) 22: 2002) In a press conference, MPP president O. Joy alleged that armed persons who were supporters of BJP candidate BD Behring carried out booth capturing in poll stations 41/27 and 41/25 and stamped the seal on all the ballot papers in favour of Behring. Gunmen obstructed poll personnel of booth number 41/54 to 41/56 and cast votes in favour of the BJP candidate, further, adding that booth capturing and rigging were carried out in almost all the centres. (Ibid) As such re-poll should be conducted in all the centres of the AC. Joy said that the major contenders in Chandel AC are the MPP candidate PR Silanki and Behring after MSCP, DPP and MNC had withdrawn their candidates and supported Silanki. He alleged Behring is being supported by armed persons. Silanki who was present in the press meet regretted that the Governor failed to take up any action even after he had requested him to grade all the booths in Chandel A/c as hyper sensitive and to deploy armed personnel. (Manipur (2) 22: 2002)

Besides, Joy further charged that the police have not taken up any step to rescue one inner agent of the MPP identified as Sen who had been abducted by unidentified persons. MPP president O Joy also condemned the attack on polling party at Laikhong in which two poll officials and one IRB jawan were killed besides injuring 12 others. The MPP also accused BJP of abducting six of its workers today at Chandel A/C. One Tata Sumo of the workers was also taken away, said MPP in a statement. The six workers are, Kh Iboton Chothe (42), Dinbin Dongmei (18), Sampui (30), Gaichunga Dongmei (18), Leo Thomson (19) and Bekey (19). The driver of the Tata Sumo, Nanao (23) was also abducted, MPP alleged. (Newmai (2) 22: 2002)

Sporadic violence and large scale booth capturing marked the final phase polling in 20 hill constituencies. Various incidents were took place in 12 stations in Tipaimukh; 7 in Henglep, 20 in Singhat, 11 in Saikul, 2 in Chandel and one each in Tadubi and Karong. Naga dominated districts witnessed by and large peaceful polling. Voting was disrupted at three stations in Churachandpur AC when armed men opened fire. Miscreants also snatched ballot boxes from 58/25 polling station in Churachandpur AC at 10.30 am. Violence erupted in the constituency at about midnight when party workers of two candidates confronted each other. (Sangai (2)22: 2002b)

It is worth mentioning that one Maruti car and one 407 mini Tata used by the workers were destroyed and the police had to step in and retrieve the damaged vehicles. In Saikot AC, booth capturing and rigging also dominated this constituency. That polling officials deputed for duty at polling stations 59/30 (Tuibong Jr. HS), 59/31 (South Wing Tuibong Community Hall) and 59/32 (Tuibong Community Hall), reported to the Churachandpur DC that armed men descended upon these polling stations at 12.30 am and captured the booths. BJP workers of Saikot AC said 'ballot boxes were snatched by workers of a rival candidate last night. They also produced the stamped ballot boxes which they had managed to take from the booth capturers. The BJP workers said two of them (booth capturers) were beaten by the public.' (Naharol (2) 22: 2002) More disturbances occurred at Saikot AC.

Polling officials at polling station 59/1 said that workers of two candidates took away all the ballot papers at 5.45 am. Polling officials said unidentified persons barged into polling station 59/

19 (Tuiningphai Jr. HS) and rigged the poll. Of the total 543 voters enlisted in the polling station the unidentified men stamped their votes on 300 ballot papers. (Ibid) Armed persons also captured polling station 59/20 (Dampi Jr HS); Polling materials were snatched. In the Singhat AC, Unidentified persons barged into polling station 60/9 last night and snatched ballot papers and stamped the same in favour of a candidate. Deputy Commissioner of the district said that till 12 pm, he received instructions to order re-poll in nine stations in Saikot AC and five in Singhat.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile a BJP election agent has requested the Chief Election Commissioner as well as the Chief Electoral Officer to order re-poll in 17 polling stations in Singhat AC. The agent said unidentified gunmen captured ballot boxes and papers in the night of Feb 19 & 20, 2002. (Poknapham (2) 22: 2002) In Tipaimukh AC, poll material were seized and set afire at Shivapurikhan polling station. There were also allegations of booth capturing in four polling centres in Henglep AC. Tengnoupal: Unidentified men snatched ballot boxes from polling station 42/1 (Tolen) and set them afire. (Ibid)

Ballot papers were also destroyed at polling station 42/29 while at polling station 42/22 voting was disrupted after only 372 votes were cast. The remaining was destroyed by unidentified men. In the Karong AC, unidentified persons snatched ballot boxes and papers at polling stations, 47/14 (Khabung) and 47/27 (Ngari Khullen). (Newmai (2) 22: 2002b) Saikul AC: Polling material were snatched at polling stations 46/13 (Khamnapokpi), 46/26 (Changpokpi), 46/36 (Phouoibi), 46/16 (Longa Koireng) and 46/14 and set on fire. Security personnel were not able to reach polling stations 46/30 and 46/31, said sources. Nungba AC: Armed men who identified themselves as members of a UG group pushed a Jeep of the FPM down a deep gorge near Toupul village.

Prohibition orders under Section 144 Cr PC have been promulgated in Tamei in Tamenglong district after tension mounted between workers of the BJP and Congress (I) over alleged snatching of ballot boxes after polling hours were over. (Sangai (2) 23: 2002) BJP candidate Athuan Abonmei and Congress (I) candidate Z. Mangaibou are trading charges over the reported snatching of ballot boxes. Athuan charged that workers of the Congress (I) candidate snatched and destroyed ballot boxes of seven polling centres namely Nalong, Makuinong, Kadi, Lemta, Kuilong,

Thenjang and Lasan. (Ibid) He submitted a representation to the District Superintendent of Police naming five persons including Mangaibou's wife as the main accused in the alleged ballot box snatching case. He demanded that 'all the five persons be brought to book and re-poll be held in all the 7 polling centres and also demanded that adequate armed guards be provided at the polling centres where re-poll will be held'. (Ibid) The BJP candidate further said his plea to provide armed guards to escort the ballot boxes turned on deaf ears. He said following tension at Tamei following the incident prohibitory orders have been promulgated. On the other hand the Congress (I) candidate said six ballot boxes of Maguinong, Lemta, Nallong, Kuilong, Kadi and Ileng were snatched away by armed persons while the polling officials along with agents of candidates were taking them on foot towards Tamei. (Newmai (2) 23: 2002) Mangaibou suspected that workers of the BJP candidate were behind the snatching of ballot boxes. The MPCC has submitted a written complaint to the Electoral Officer saying booths were captured by armed persons at Nalong, Thenjang, Lahsan and Nungjao. It demanded re-poll in these polling stations. Stating that the District Magistrate and ROs would be held responsible if any untoward incident takes place as fallout of the snatching of the ballot boxes. Meanwhile, FPM Nungba unit condemned the alleged assault of six party workers by supporters of the Congress (I) candidate in their attempt to capture booths during polling yesterday.

On the other, three agents of the MSCP candidate in 43-Phungyar constituency, Wungnaoshang Keishing, were beaten up by armed miscreants' on Feb. 23, 2002 evening at Nambasi Khullen village while the re-polls held to be held on next day at a polling station (43/27) in the village.xv Wungnaoshang Keishing, accompanied by his agents and workers, as well as pressman, had gone to the village incident-day evening at around 7 pm when they were stopped by armed gunmen and rowdy elements just before entering the village. Three agents of Wungnaoshang Keishing were beaten black and blue and threatened with dire consequences. Thereafter, the armed gunmen forced Wungnaoshang Keishing and his companions to turn back. W. Keishing has filed a complaint with the DC, Ukhrul in this regard, charging that the incident was a prelude to booth capturing during re-poll Feb. 24, 2002. (Ibid)

With the close observation it has significance to know the consequence of dictating politics that 11 Naga-dominated constituencies of the State are spread in the four hill districts of Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel. Six of these were won by independent candidates backed by the UNC. However, in the remaining five seats, UNC-sponsored candidates were defeated. The verdict comes against the background of a UNC diktat to candidates who did not have its backing to withdraw from the contest in favour of consensus candidates. The Congress won in only two of these 11 Naga-inhabited seats, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Gaikhangam retaining the Nungba constituency in Tamenglong district and D.D. Thasii winning the Karong seat in Senapati District.

The UNC shortlisted 11 independent candidates from among 61, who signed a pledge before the apex Naga body on January 16 to take up the cause of Naga integration in the Assembly. Naga representatives who signed a similar pledge in 2002 failed to perform their duty of working for the 'Naga cause' and raise the issue on the floor of the House after they were elected. (Ibid) In Ukhrul district, the UNC made a 'sweep' the candidates it backed won all the three seats of the Naga-dominated hill district, which is also the home district of Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaac-Muivah), or NSCN(I-M). In Tamenglong district, however, Khangthunanang Panmei, an independent candidate who was abducted by NSCN(I-M) cadre days before the third phase of the polling and was literally forced to announce his withdrawal from the contest, won by a margin of 8,46 votes from the Tamenglong Assembly constituency, defeating the UNC-sponsored candidate and sitting MLA Samuel Jendai. (Ibid)

The UNC's agenda of Naga integration made the issue of Manipur's territorial integrity an important one in popular perception. The State's territorial boundary seemed to be at stake with the prospect of representatives backed by the UNC raising the issue in the Assembly. All the parties, including the Congress, made Manipur's territorial integrity a major poll plank. The verdict showed that the electorate in the valley saw the Congress as the only party that could take on the apex Naga body. The party won only five of the 1 seats in the hill constituencies, though in 2002 it won as many as 10. In spite of this setback, its overall tally increased

by 1 because in the valley it won 25 seats. In all her election rallies, Congress president Sonia Gandhi stressed that her party was committed to protecting the territorial integrity of Manipur.

#### ■ PERSUASIVE OBSERVATION:

Many Naga people and Naga NGOs have been trying to make more unite and close cooperation organizing traditional functions and even campaigned door to door in the entire hill areas to convince and support such unification demand. Some Naga politicians and social organization claimed that the word "Manipur Integrity" is against their aspiration of Naga Unification. Besides some sections of Naga community do not have much interest on the integration demand. For the fulfilment of their goal politicians make more attention on communal politics. Moreover Naga politicians searching advantage on the prevailing circumstances as a golden opportunity for their political career. Such politicians gear up communal feelings and spreading anti Meiteism base on past history of kingdom where kings and meiteis superseded and look down very narrow. Only for their political gain politicians frequently insisted many innocent electorates to protest and condemn the ruling government charging betray or neglect them in any field on communal line. Even former longest Chief Minister, MP Rishang Keishing himself claimed "Meitei Betrayed". (North-East (7)15: 2005)

People have lost confidence on the people's representatives that before the incident many Chief Ministers and other Ministers promised, and even Union Ministers including Home Minister and Prime Minister assured the people not to do against the people's aspiration but they did against their commitment. It is coming known, Rajya Sabha MP Rishang Keishing and Lok Sabha MP Mani Charanamei along with some other Ministers and MLAs of Naga community in the present coalition Secular Progressive Front government led by Cong I (2002-07) has closed relation with NSCN-IM leader Th. Muivah and even they act under the supervision of him that proved by a meeting photograph published on the North-East Sun Aug 15, 2005. With the coming end of Indo-Naga ceasefire term on July 31, 2005 both NSCN-IM and people's representative of Naga community have been taken up various strategies along with Naga's pressure groups and student organizations. In the last

week of May 27, 2005 a memorandum signed by 13 Naga representatives (2 MP and 11 MLA & Ministers) of Manipur have submitted to the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh urging their aspirations. Of them former CM, MP(RS) Rishang Keishing, MP(LS) Mani Charanamei, Minister Gaikhangam, Francis Ngajokpa, RK Theko, Z. Mangaibou, AZ Aza, from ruling INC, Danny Sheija & BD. Beharing of (BJP) Henary Paote and Samuel Zendai from FPM, Wungnaoshing Keishing MSCP (later merged with Cong), DK. Karunthang (SAP). Out of which MP Mani Charanamei an unknown name till the LS election 2004, was fielded as independent candidate with full support of NSCN-IM that proved by many reported evidence. (Pradeep 2005: 14)

No one heard about the memorandum submitted by Naga representatives to the PM of India and even some people could not believe such act of former CM Rishang Keishing that all the peoples regard him as leader of Manipur. But, reality was no longer hidden that signature issue spread out by many social organizations including UPF (United People's Front), UCM (United Committee Manipur an organization for the protection of territorial boundary, established after June Uprising 2001) and followed by media persons on daily newspapers and magazines published outside Manipur. Thus odd news hits sentiments of Manipuris particularly majority community Meiteis and other none Naga communities. Many civil societies and social organizations demanded clarification from who indulged in the memorandum and even to take up necessary actions for their aims of disintegrating Manipur by their belonging political parties. Particular points in the memorandum is *"in case of territorial integration of the Naga areas, we believed that it is our sincere question and the basic fundamental rights of the Naga people to be under one political entity and live together. (Ibid) We therefore fully support the aspiration of Naga people for integration."* By knowing their full support in the disintegration of Manipur various pressure groups including some political parties demanded state government to take up necessary actions. Mention may be made; no one can presume or predict what the Naga leader Rishang Keishing really think, whether his expression or act is real thinking or political game for his political career to capture power and to woo his voters as well as Naga peoples. Sometimes he appeals to live all the ethnic communities as done earlier in such kingdom Manipur.

By the public pressure, in the Assembly the House passed a unanimous voice vote resolution without much of ado reaffirming its earlier resolution not to allow disintegration of Manipur under whatever the circumstance for the six times. Reportedly, Naga MLAs remained silent during the proceedings. Technically, this would be treated as their consent to the house resolution. Lending credence to this is also the fact that a resolution by the Secular Progressive Front government vowing to oppose any move to disintegrate Manipur, was signed by some signatories in the memorandum in question. However, regardless of what the circumstances were the issues needed to be thrashed out openly. The state needs to know if even its elected Naga leaders feel the rifts between communities cannot be mended and that they must part ways. (Ibid)

North-Eastern Students Organisation held a meeting in relating to the blockade on July 30-31, 2005 and appealed to withdraw as early. Meanwhile a team of agitators met home Minister Sibraaj Patil and AICC president Sonia Gandhi demanding to fulfil their aspiration on Aug. 1, 2005. On the other hand, United Development Association, Thoubal, Manipur moved a Public Interest Litigation to the Guwahati High Court for violation of right to life. In response to the PIL the court instructed the central Govt. and state Govt. to take up necessary action against the agitators, but Govt. remained silent. Some ministers (Gobindas, Mangi Alaodin, Chaltolian) met the agitators at DC office Senapati but backed with empty handed. (Ibid) Over and above, one organization of Assam had threatened to launch same counter blockade on Nagaland in the Assam territory. Another one organization of Manipur was also announced to start counter blockade unless it withdraw. After considering many factors Agitators express their willingness to hold talks through local newspapers but one condition was put up that the dialogue should be held at any Naga areas or Senapati H.Q or outside Manipur, not in Imphal. Efforts are on to involve Governor SS. Sidhu in talks to resolve the blockade. Sidhu in his report to the centre had pointed out that an 'Unnecessary holiday notice had triggered the present unrest'. Lastly, Chief Minister O. Ibobi diverted his commitment of holiday on integration day announcement stating that it had not been placed on the official list of general holidays, and no concrete decision had on whether it would be retained as a general holiday

next year. Even though none of the Naga MLAs and ministers has complied with the directives, ANSAM continues to hold the entire state to ransom.

In due course, communal tones of Rishang Keishing flash out from North-East Sun, a monthly magazine on July 15, 2005 charging '*Meiteis Betrayed*'. Many peoples and political parties condemned such tone and demanded clarification. After a long, Rishang clarified his viewed for making signature on the memorandum. He was disagreed the charge of disintegration of Manipur and opined only for wanting to live under a political entity of Naga. He kept mum when asking, is there any political entity without disintegration of Manipur on interviewed taken by journalist. Communal feelings of MP Manicharanami was also seen on another press release where he mentioned boldly, that "He will work for Nagas that he elected by them". In fact, he forgot other community belongs to his constituency. His communal tone was severely criticized by many social organizations as illegal on the basis of such secular India. In the meantime he met Prime Minister Dr. Manmohon Singh and submitted another memorandum labelling the Manipur Govt. communal and seeking separate administrative arrangement for the hill and valley on the plea that tribal residents of the hills have no future under the present political dispensation. (Ibid) It ought to have kept in mind that the allegation is a familiar refrain from many different levels. Local media suggested to the Govt. of Manipur to form a House Committee to prepare comprehensive 'white paper' on the employment as well as the power sharing scenario in the state. It could have put it black and white as to the community-wise percentage of employees in all hierarchies of Govt. jobs from the very top to the bottom. It could have also officially established on to the number of ministers from different communities who have held key portfolios such as Health, Works, Finance, Education, etc. In fact in high ranking post both civil and active services majority of the Naga & Kuki community hold the key bureaucrat posts. Thus in all the Govt. departments, in terms of average population of different community it may not less or high by any particular community except some exceptional. In response to public demand regarding the signatory issue of memorandum, on June 25, 2005 one of them Samuel Zendai a former Tribal Welfare minister and present MLA belonging to Federal Party of Manipur clarified in an interview on Imphal Free

Press as why he chose to sign the memorandum. He said that the idea of integration of Naga inhabited areas was the desire of Naga people, and mentioned he had acted in their interest. He said, 'after all, I am their elected representative and it is my duty to act according to their desires.' (Sangai (6)25: 2005) The division appeared complete.

Strong influence of communal feelings to Naga leaders gear up by Naga organizations. As did usual by NSCN-IM, on July 13, 2005 ANSAM asked all the Naga MLAs and Ministers in Manipur to resign, declaring that Naga identity and dignity can't be safeguarded under the present arrangement of Manipur state under any circumstances. Nevertheless, no Naga MLAs and Minister consider it seriously. ANSAM however, later convinced themselves their communal tone and corrected its statement it had meant that the MLAs should resign of their free will, should they feel the environment they were working in was oppressive. (Sangai (7)13: 2005) Without any solution or talk with the Govt. of Manipur, ANSAM suspended blockade since Aug 11, 2005 by considering the appeals and pressures from different quarters.

#### ■ *Notes:*

- <sup>1</sup> What we experiencing electoral activities in the remote and hill areas the writer interviewed with various official who discharged election duty in the hill areas, one of them Baleshor, U. (who engaged in the election duty in the hill area, 2007) said that they have no option even the security forces cannot interfered on the activities carried out by armed miscreants, perhaps they might have to support particular candidate in such areas. Sometimes they voted as representative of all the electorates. July 7, 2008
- <sup>2</sup> It is very unfortunate those electoral scenes not only in the hill but also in the valley area have been dominating a culture of coercive and threat. Besides, many candidates have their own private army, it is very dangerous in the electoral politics that in politics the concept of 'might is right' becoming common phenomena. In this regard it is worth to mention that ruling party MLA Ng. Kumarjit drew attention all the members of the House to far away from this predicament culture. Assembly proceeding, Manipur Legislative Assembly, Government of Manipur, July 22, 1991
- <sup>3</sup> A memorandum submitted by the Khullakpas, Gouburas and elders of the Mao Nagas to the Governor of Assam, apparently when he visited to Mao on Jan 2, 1946.

- <sup>4</sup> Daiho A, 'My views on the tendency of future Hills administration of Manipur or Demand of the Hills' General people; Spt. 5, 1946
- <sup>5</sup> Proceedings of a meeting of Hillman held on Aug 13, 1947, at Imphal under the chairmanship of R. Suisa; in Mangi, S., "A study on selected Socio-Political problems in Manipur (1947-80); unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Manipur University; p. 344
- <sup>6</sup> Telegram from president of Naga state, Kohima to the Maharaja of Manipur on Aug. 14, 1947, in Mangi, S., 'A study on selected Socio-Political problems in Manipur (1947-80); unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Manipur University: p. 345
- <sup>7</sup> Telegram from president of Naga state, Kohima to the Maharaja of Manipur on Aug. 14, 1947, in Mangi, S., 'A study on selected Socio-Political problems in Manipur (1947-80)' unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Manipur University: p. 345
- <sup>8</sup> Memorandum dated Jan. 20, 1946 signed by N. Modoli and A. Daihom president of NNL in Mangi, S., 'A study on selected Socio-Political problems in Manipur (1947-80)' unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Manipur University: p. 347
- <sup>9</sup> In due course of cease-fired extension in the territory of Manipur and the upshot of the extension that generating social chaos and restless to the citizen who worried of integrity opined from different quarters that describing it as an attempt to divide the people of the hills and valley in the State Kakhulong Youth Committee and Kakhulong Women Society (Naga voluntary organizations) asserted their view. (Online) available at: <http://www.sentinelassam.com/>, accessed on Feb. 3, 2008
- <sup>10</sup> Most of the people have apathy on politics as well as election that the confidence on the representatives of the people was very very low since the MLAs could do nothing on the sensitive issue of territorial integrity. As such former members and ministers have even uncertainty to publicise their candidature in the forthcoming Assembly election. O. Joy, MPP president said in a press conference, the Imphal Free Press, English local newspaper, Imphal, Feb. 7, 2002
- <sup>11</sup> Propaganda on the leading newspaper was very influential factor at that time. Since there were various threats to the Naga aspirant candidates from the UNC in particular many candidate and electorates have lot of anxiety. On the other, UNC directed to all the Naga aspirant candidates to make undertaking in the prescribed Performa which a

kind of pledge to do after they enter in the Assembly. The Imphal Free Press, English local newspaper, under the caption of *Naga candidates sign pledge to make common cause once elected*, Imphal, Feb. 8, 2002

- <sup>12</sup> There was political chaos when many Naga candidates even including former minister signed in the Senapati conclave on the prescribed declaration. Most of the people have eagerly looked into the upcoming scenario that base on the electoral politics and overestimation of ethnic orientation. Central leaders of the different party had also announced that BJP leader and Union Minister of State for Home ID Swami today stated that fitting action will be taken up against party candidates if they were found to have signed the Senapati declaration. Reiterated that action deemed fit by the party will be taken up if the candidates were found to have signed the declaration. (Sangai Express Feb. 10, 2002) Mention may be made that DPP to march against Senapati 'pledge' (Online) available at: <http://www.e-pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=4&src=100202>, accessed on March, 2009
- <sup>13</sup> From different quarters it was condemned as anti-democratic. With this view the KIM president, P. Gange, in a statement issued said the UNC is gathering dark clouds of tension by forging the 'forced-signed' declaration warning that it will have far reaching consequences to destabilize the already disturbed social harmony of the pluralistic society of Manipur. KIM flays Naga MLAs pact, (Online) available at: <http://www.e-pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=5&src=140202>, accessed on Imphal, Feb. 14, 2002
- <sup>14</sup> Various malpractices in the election witnessed in the hill areas commonly, counter attacked / allegation against each other contestants and workers which was sometime very absurd / violent in nature. The leading newspapers reported the incidents and demanding re-poll. Unidentified persons barged into polling station 60/9 last night and snatched ballot papers and stamped the same in favour of a candidate. Deputy Commissioner of the district said that till 12 pm, he received instructions to order re-poll in nine stations in Saikot AC and five in Singhat. Final phase poll marred by large scale booth capturing, (Online) available at: <http://www.e-pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=1&src=220202>, accessed on Dec. 21, 2009
- <sup>15</sup> Violent marred democratic process in some hilly polling stations. Armed miscreants acted as what they like. Wungnaoshang Keishing, a candidate in the Phungyar A/c of Ukhrul District was also amongst the victim of political violence who accompanied by his agents and workers, as well as pressman, had gone to the village incident-day evening at around 7

pm when they were stopped by armed gunmen and rowdy elements just before entering the village. Three agents of Wungnaoshang Keishing were beaten black and blue and threatened with dire consequences. Polling agents beaten up, (Online) available at: <http://www.e.pao.net/epRelatedNews.asp?heading=4&src=250202> accessed on Feb. 23, 2008

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