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, विद्या नाम नरस्य रूपमधिकं प्रच्छन्नगुप्तं धनं  
विद्याभोगकरी यशःसुखकरी विद्या गुरुणां गुरुः।  
विद्या बन्धुजनो विदेश गमने विद्या परम दैवतम्  
विद्या राजसु पूज्यते नहि धनं विद्यविहीनः पशुः॥

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## DYNAMICS OF ETHNIC POLITICS IN CONFLICT STATE MANIPUR: REPERCUSSION ON REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

L. Muhindro Singh

**1. Introduction:** The goal of elections is to have an open competitive to the eligible citizens, aspirant candidates and electorates to exercise their rights for installing a government of the people for the people. Democracy largely depends on the level of electoral system and its participation.<sup>1</sup> Those scholars who dealt with the democracy felt to appreciate the quality of new democracies around the world, and considered the changing pattern of mass participation.<sup>2</sup> If the result of the elections can't reflect accurately the will of the electorates, the process and the outcome will demean democracy and eventually develop flawed democracy. See the experience of Manipur where ethnic assertion on electoral politics is dominating in contemporary in the hill areas. Non-state actors have been trying to insert their infiltrators in the lawmaking bodies with certain perspective. No one will deny Manipur has dual governance of constitutional and non-constitutional and more powerful by non-constitutional one which is long experience of Manipur. In contemporary, many armed opposition groups have been entering in electoral politics and politicians have nexus with them for mutual benefit. Such trends are seemingly very noticeable phenomena of electoral politics in the sense that both the central and state government are also somehow managed it and claimed free and fair elections. They often made attempt to nominate their candidates who have loyal to them, eventually such coercive influence violate electoral rights of those aspirant candidate. And also even create an unusual social chaos where people reluctant to express their freedom of thought. Ethnic Civil organisations and frontal organisation supported by armed outfits are also actively involved in electoral politics in the hill areas with certain objective. On the other hand, the dynamics of ethnic assertion on the eve of elections in the valley area is quite different that such ethnic influences are very low. Various factors associated with ethnic conflict sometimes affect electoral integrity. In such conflict areas

'bullying' is one of the most common factors on the eve of election. In contemporary electoral rights are often violated on the eve of elections. Different acts of state and non-state actors have been threatening human rights. The United Naga Council (UNC) in the State made clear that they would like to be part of a Greater Nagaland as demanded by the NSCN-IM and strongly involved in the electoral politics since NSCN-IM entered in political dialogue with Government of India. No one will believe it the act of one national party, issuing threats to prevent the potential contestant from participating in the electoral process.<sup>3</sup> In the political conference organized by the Nambol Block Congress committee (NBCC) at the Nambol AC on 12 January 2007 resolved to socially ostracise any person belonging to the Leimapokpam Gram Panchayat (GP) Area who attempts to contest the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly and also not to allow any form of election canvassing in the said area. One of its resolutions stated that if any resident of the area within the jurisdiction of the Leimapokpam GP area files nomination or campaign for any party other than the INC, they would be thrown out of locality.<sup>4</sup>

**2. Political Party On Ethnic Line:** Obviously, ethnic political party is not yet emerged in the valley though some hill based political party have much vocal on the ethnic line for their political gain but not so success. The KNA (Kuki National Assembly)<sup>5</sup> was one of the earliest political parties which emerged in the hills of Manipur that raised the grievances of the hill people and actively participated in the electoral politics<sup>6</sup> though it was seemingly extinct in contemporary. The party stands for preserving and improving the culture of the Kukis, freedom from external exploitation and unification of their geographical areas into a political unity.<sup>7</sup> It became the mouthpiece of the non-Naga Hill Tribes in Manipur demanding a Kuki state within the framework of Indian federation in 1960, and later on further relaxed its stand by demanding a full-fledged revenue district for the Kukis

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- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Naga National Party (NNP) manifesto, 8<sup>th</sup> Manipur State Legislative assembly Elections, 2002, p. 1.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Besides, Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio in his election rally in Tamenglong district had stated that NPF MLAs would bring up the Naga issue in the Manipur Legislative Assembly. Staff reporter, 'O Joy cautions Rio to desist dragging integrity issue into polls', Sangai Express, Imphal, 17 January 2012*
- 13 *Imphal Free Press under the caption of Choose with prudence, Reported on 26 January 2012 that 'Few days back, suspected NSCN-IM cadres reportedly tried to abduct the President of the Nungba Block Congress Committee and in the ensuing clashes and firing 3 Congress workers were injured.'*
- 14 *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*
- 15 *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*
- 16 *The growing nexus between the undergrounds and the over ground political leaders and the civil servants is directly related to the lure for easy money. As the people do not trust the state police to protect them, the different ethnic groups have organized their own armed militias. They need funds to maintain these armed, which they secure by extortion and pilferage of government funds practiced on large scale. Ved Marwah, Former Governor, Manipur and Jharkhand delivered a lecture on Ethno-Political situation in India's Northeast, at Centre for Strategic Analysis, Tamilnadu, 19 May 2010*
- 17 *The Imphal Free Press, English local daily vernacular, 22 January 2007*
- 18 *The Sangai Express, English local daily vernacular, 5 February 2007*
- 19 *The Sangai Express, English local daily vernacular, 21 February 2007*
- 20 *But their names continue to include in the Ballot as there were no official cognizance of such candidates who were cleared for contesting after scrutiny and who did not withdraw their candidature within the given time are considered as contesting candidate.*
- 21 *The Sangai Express, English local daily vernacular, Imphal, 20 February 2007*
- 22 *The Imphal Free Press, English local daily vernacular, 20 February 2007*
- 23 *Hueiyen News Service, Congress presses ECI to disqualify NPF candidates, The Hueiyenlanpao, Manipur, 8 February 2012*
- 24 *Staff reporter, NSCN-IM 'poll rampage', The Sangai Express, Manipur, 31 January 2012*
- 25 *Editor, Silent Elections, Imphal Free Press, Manipur, 23 January 2012*
- 26 *Press Trust of India, PC admits IM hand in poll orgy, Imphal Free Press, Manipur, 2 February 2012*
- 27 *Editor, Silent Elections, Imphal Free Press, Manipur, 23 January 2012*
- 28 *Hueiyen News Service, TMC demands re-poll in hill constituencies while BJP wants re-poll in Thoubal AC, The Hueiyenlanpao, Manipur 31 January 2012*
- 29 *The Imphal Free Press, English local daily vernacular, 20 February 2007*
- 30 *The Manipur Mail, English local daily vernacular, 21 February 2007*
- 31 *Bibhu Prasad Routray, Manipur Assembly Elections: Divergence of Ethnic Interests, Institute for Conflict Management, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/military/manipur-assembly-elections-divergence-of-ethnic-interests-703.html>, accessed on 23 October 2010*
- 32 *I wilfully support the ongoing Indo-Naga Peace talks for a negotiated and honorable Solution. On being elected I will steadfastly defend the interest of the Naga people for the integration/Unification of the Naga Areas; That I will resign from the Manipur Legislative Assembly if called upon to do so by the Naga people represented by the UNC; ... I declare that I will accept without any reservation whatsoever, the candidature of the particular person who is determined by the Naga people represented by the UNC to be the consensus candidate; ...I shall not defect/ split/ merge to any political party without the approval of the Naga people represented by the UNC. Failing to fulfill the above Commitments and Declaration, I and my witness shall be made liable to any measures adopted by the Naga people.*
- 33 *North East Sun, weekly magazine, Guwahati, (7)15: 2005*