

The election studies: the manipur experience



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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Objectives of the Study](#) \n \t
2. [Methodology of the Study](#) \n \t
3. [Hypothesis](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

The study of elections in Manipur as an academic discourse is of recent origin. There is hardly any authoritative text on the topic. However, of late, there has been an increase interest among scholars and researchers alike in its study.

A. Prafullokumar Singh

R. P. Singh analyses the political behaviour in Manipur, and with an equally fascinating politics, in the light of its ecological setting in the fifth general elections held in 1972. It also surveys previous elections and also briefly touches up to three post 1972 elections in order to give a broad based picture of the political situation in the state.

John Parratt^[3] gives an account of cultural renaissance and political awakening and the challenges of the colonial rule in Manipur. He argues that British rule was mainly responsible for the growth of democratic institution and created an atmosphere among the people to rise against feudalism. He, also points out that the circumstances in which Manipur was annexed into the Indian Union was mainly responsible for the growth of insurgencies, subsequently resulting in the militarization of the state.

Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, Kh. Elizabeth Devi, Maqbul Ali & Ratna Bhuyan, Omeo Kumar Das[4] gives an account of the history of election politics, narrates as well as analyze the profiles of all the elections ever held in Manipur with a special emphasis on 2007 state assembly election which delivered a decisive mandate for change; change for development and stability, which had been unclear for 40 years. It presents an eloquent assessment of the political economy of the state which has bearing on the political process of the state. It outlines the important issues which needed adequate attention of the contestant and parties, highlights the alliances that some of the political parties forged, focus on the nature of election campaign, magnitude of pre and post election poll violence; and analyze the poll result as well. The conclusion puts forward a philosophical interpretation of electoral politics in Manipur which could be relevant to any insurgency affected state in the Indian Union.

Oinam Shyam Singh[5] explores political attitude and political behaviour in Bishnupur district of Manipur emphasizing on the socio-economic and political life of the people in the district. Salam Sanatomba Singh[6] gives an account of how voters cast their vote by analyzing the various ways by which voters reach their voting decision, its timing, and factors determining their vote choice. Md. Abdul Salam[7] discusses political participation of the Muslim voters in Manipur arguing whether they participate in the electoral process as “ good actors or not; whether communalism does exist or not.” It deals with wide ranges of issues faced by muslims in Manipur. Maibam Suresh Singh[8] makes a modest attempt to analyse assembly elections in Manipur in the light of socio-political aspect prevailing in the state. Reemila

Devi Shagolshem[9] gives a systematic account of the nature of political participation prevailing in Nambol assembly constituency of Manipur with emphasis on voting turnout taken as major indicator. It also analyses the electoral behaviour of the constituency.

Khangjrakpam Gourachandra Singh[10] studies political development in Manipur through elections, voting behaviour and formation of government both under British colonial rule and after independence. Laishram Banita Devi[11] gives an account of the important aspects of election study and electoral performances of major political parties, their campaigns and mobilization and their result. Laishram Nandini Devi[12] attempts to analyse the evolution of electoral politics in Manipur, significance of the election manifesto, interpretation of the election result while focusing on the Eleventh General Elections to Lok Sabha of Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency.

Ng. Ngalengnam[13]

The various study made so far, make an attempt towards analyzing the state of electoral politics but a detailed examination of the topic in Manipur that primarily focuses on particular constituency remains still unexplored till date.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to explore the nature of electoral politics and to examine certain unanswered questions so far. The questions which this research intends to answer are the following:

What electoral politics is prevailed in the Constituency?

What specific role do electorates play during the election?

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What are the factors which influences the voters during elections?

Do elected candidates fulfill the wishes of the people?

Does the process of electoral politics reflect the liberal principles of democracy?

This research makes a modest attempt to examine the above questions and other related questions which may arise during the course of analysis or are present yet gone unnoticed. The examination of these questions makes the research relevant as it shall makes us better understanding of the nature of electoral politics in the constituency under study, in particular and of the state of Manipur, in general.

Methodology of the Study

This research, therefore, shall analyse the nature of electoral politics in the constituency. For the purpose, it takes into consideration specific research methods and sources of materials. The methodology adopted for the study is historical-cum-analytical.

The various sources of materials to be used for the study can be presented in the following ways: the primary sources of the study include – Manipur Gazette Extra Ordinary, 1972-2007; Records of the Chief Election Office, Imphal, etc. Among the secondary sources, relevant books on the topic including journals, periodicals, etc., are used.

In addition, a questionnaire

I will here use Yadav's definition of this particular method:

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... a technique of data gathering in which a sample of respondents is asked questions about their political preferences and beliefs to draw conclusions about political opinions, attitudes and behavior of a wider population of citizens[14]

Hypothesis

Introduction to the field site

Significance of the study:

Elections in democratic societies are generally viewed as the primary tool to solicit and evaluate citizen preferences over policy matters and to hold representatives accountable. By indirectly and directly engaging citizens in the policy-making process, elections can engender feelings of efficacy and encourage other forms of political participation.[15]The importance of the study of elections as a means to understand the political processes is well recognised all over the world. As Norman Palmer[16](1975) pointed out, the study of elections provides an opportunity to study the political system in action. They played a central role in mobilizing people into the political process, crystallising public opinion on a host of issues, institutional functioning and styles of leadership, and in the emergence and recruitment of a new political elite.

So far, India has seen 13 Parliamentary elections and an almost equal number of Legislative Assembly elections in each State. It is indeed a great experiment in consolidating and operating democracy in a large and ancient country like India, trying to stand on its own feet after nearly two centuries of colonial rule. For a country with relatively little experience of struggle for

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parliamentary democracy and franchise, afflicted by congenital defects and constrained by social problems, it was no mean achievement of its people, as they still attempt to resolve their problems in a democratic and peaceful way, that elections could take place at regular intervals, parties in government could be changed without violence, power could be transferred peacefully to new sets of leaders, political parties could transform themselves from the era of mass politics of the freedom struggle to competitive politics, and a government based on law with an assurance of basic freedoms to the people was made possible.