

Editorial

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For a little bit more

The one basic thing that could make much of almost everything much easier, simpler and smoother, yet seemingly impossible to accomplish is the act of coming clean. It would indeed take a much greater strength of character to own up to our mistakes and shortcomings, and still greater willpower to refrain from deliberately committing acts we consciously know is wrong and false.

The few fortunate ones who have the grit and will to transcend these urges are acknowledged and respected, even revered. On the other hand, a new breed of "Go-Getters" who would not stop at anything to achieve their goal is on the rise- the pressures of present day society helping in developing and pruning such mindset to perfection.

They are the restless, hyperactive and aggressive ones who do not cater to emotions and aesthetics. Modern parents and guardians are increasingly urging their wards to adopt the letter approach towards life in order to carve out a place in the society that invariably results in a level of respect- respect that again is dependent on the earning capacity, the social circle adopted and living status maintained. Increasing compulsions for security in terms of food, shelter and a step towards a more secure future could be the factors that prompted the collective thinking towards adopting such an attitude towards life. But then, does that justify the adage "All is fair and love and war"? Is our life becoming a daily struggle, a battle- if not a war, we are destined to wage every single living day of our lives? Where does that leave us with any room or opportunity for improvement- not the financial kind, but a more rounded and holistic one as a person? The present developments in the society- particularly that of mindless atrocities and lack of considerations that is becoming rampant would be, to a large part, a spill-off of this new approach towards life. Greed takes precedence over everything else, making our lives worse off than when we started. What then could be the panacea for these aberrations that has come to plague our lives of late?

The answer lies within us- common knowledge which just needs to be acknowledged, and more importantly to act on. Putting up a façade of make-believe and a show of benevolence and righteousness will not absolve anyone of the crimes and wrongs.

This is of utmost importance for everyone, and more so for those who are donning the role of public representatives. Concepts like beauty, peace and harmony can only be experienced if we can rise above our petty urges and look at life- that of ourselves and the ones around us in a different and totally new perspective- one that does not have anything to do with wealth, power or fame. But how does one explain these "abstract" concepts, even after knowing them to be true, to someone struggling to earn a square meal on a daily basis? Aren't there adequate schemes and programs to alleviate these basic sufferings being borne by a majority of the people in the State? How do these people who are consistently trying to find any menial job just to earn enough to eat come to know of these schemes if they are not informed, and more importantly, assist them in getting their fair share? Who would not want a little extra, even inspite of having more than everything they could possibly ever need in life?

The best persons to validate this observation will be in the performance of those in whose hands are the reign of power and affairs of the State. "The earth has enough to satisfy man's needs but not man's greed": Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Legal Clinic

Article 170 in The Constitution of India 1949

170. Composition of the Legislative Assemblies

(1) Subject to the provisions of Article 333, the Legislative Assembly of each State shall consist of not more than five hundred, and not less than sixty, members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the State

(2) For the purposes of clause (1), each State shall be divided into territorial constituencies in such manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the State Explanation In this clause, the expression population means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published: Provided that the reference in this Explanation to the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published shall, until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2000 have been published, be construed as a reference to the 1971 census

(3) Upon the completion of each census, the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of each State and the division of each State into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may by law determine: Provided that such readjustment shall not affect representation in the Legislative Assembly until the dissolution of the then existing Assembly: Provided further that such readjustment shall take effect from such date as the President may, by order, specify and until such readjustment takes effect, any election to the Legislative Assembly may be held on the basis of the territorial constituencies existing before such readjustment: Provided also that until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2000 have been published, it shall not be necessary to readjust the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of each State and the division of such State into territorial constituencies under this clause.

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THE MERGER OF MANIPTJR INTO INDIA AND THE MANIPUR STATE CONGRESS

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The merger of Manipur into India was a great significant event in the history of Manipur and at the same time the birth of Manipur State congress was also a great political development in the political development of this state. So, the history of the merger agreement and the Manipur State Congress may be treated as the two faces of the same coin because when the matter of the merger is to be discussed the role of the Manipur State Congress cannot be set aside. In this respect we cannot just ignore the predominant political role played by the Manipur State Congress between the year 1946-49, and it is also a fact that they played a very important motivating role for the merger of Manipur into India. Indeed, two compelling phenomenon were responsible for the integration of Manipur into India, i.e. internal and external factors. The internal factor means the internal political condition which was prevailing in the state and the external factor means the pressure from the leaders of the MCC and government of India. The objective of this paper is to make a humble attempt to highlight the role played by the Manipur State Congress at the time of the process of integration. In this connection it can be suggested that the process of integration is directly interlinked with the history of the changing political development of Manipur right from the birth of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha.

Indeed, the establishment of this political organization may be suggested as a gestation period for the emergence of the idea of merger of Manipur into the political boundary of the Indian Union. If we closely observed the composition and the political affiliation of the members of the Mahasava it can be stressed that the political party was constituted by the members who have two different objective. One group was in favour of the integration and another was in favour of Manipur nationalism. Their difference was clearly demonstrated by their later political action. However, their political difference was not visible at the early stage because it was cover by the unanimous opinions of anti-imperialism and anti-feudal issues. Then in the year 1939 the demarcating line of their differences, although it was not very clear, came to visible point. In this year, the issue of Nupi Lan (women agitation) the party was split into two. Hijam Irabot Singh, the president of the Mahasava and some other members felt that this movement was basically aimed for the upliftment of the economic position of the state and so they fixed their target against the exploiters who were given protection by the colonial rulers and feudal lord the mahasava of Manipur. He was of the opinion that it was not agitation of the women but a movement of the people. (Irabot's Address on 7th January 1940 at police Line). On the basis of this view his group wanted to extended the full co-operation of Mahasava to the women. But the other remaining members, without giving any reasonable agreement, did not shared his view. Such type of political stand of the majority members of the Mahasava may be observed as contradiction or ambiguous to their anti-feudal and anti-colonial stand. In the meantime the Second world war broke out and this war have brought a complete change in the political landscape of Manipur. Just after the end of the war everybody began to feel that the impending independence from the colonial rule was not only a matter of time. Such type of political development was also closely monitored by the likeminded people who seem to be a believer in the political culture of the Indian National Congress. Their inner political motive was clearly revealed by their later political action. But outwardly they strongly asserted the immediate need to establish in common platform of all the parties so that it would be able to represent the general feeling of the masses. Keeping this view in their mind a preliminary meeting was held on 18th

September 1946 at the Aryan Theater Hall in which all members shared their view. Accordingly a ruling was convened at the initiative of some people like R.K. Maipaksana, Sagolsem Indramani, Nongmaithem Sudhir, Leitam Yaima, A. Lalmani, R.K. Priyogopsana etc. (R.K. Maipaksana was the important of the writers). This conference was a very significant in the political history of Manipur because it laid the basic foundation for the loss of the political identity of Manipur. The organisers invited three representatives from each political party and it was held on the 4th October 1946 at Aryan Theatre Hall. But the most surprising and dramatic episode of the conference was the objection raised by some delegates at the presence of Hijam Irabot Singh. They alleged that he could not be a delegate as he was already in touch with communist party when he was in exile. It also said that all the members of the Mahasava also joined hands with this objection and the organisers also appeared to be in favour of the objection. Such type of political attitude of the organisers had clearly demonstrated their real political motive and at the same time it may also be deduce that their action was serious contradiction to their plan of forming a common political platform which was supposed to be constituted by the representatives of various political organisation. From their policy now it was quite clear that the real intention of the organisers was to establish a political party which could represent their political outlook. In a way their political ideology was very much different from the idea of true Manipur nationalism of Late Hijam Irabot Singh. Thus due to the strong opposition from other delegates Irabot was forced to permanently from the ruling and the unanimously resolved to form a new Party called Manipur State Congress. The formation of this party was indeed a great success of silent whispering campaign which was initiated from the very inception of Mahasava by the likeminded person who observes to make a permanent political platform through which their political idea could be spread among the people of the State. In short it can be observed that the establishment of this party paved a way, for the integration of Manipur into India. Just after the establishment of this party all the members of the Mahasava who were once against the political principle of Irabot also joined into congress party Shri R.K. Bhubonsana was elected as the first President of the Manipur State Congress, Shri Yumnam Khoimacha Singh and Shri Budhachandra Roy was made as the Secretary & Office Secretary of the Party respectively. Then they also began to launch their political movement with some basic demands like the establishment of responsible Government in Manipur etc. Thus, the Manipur State Congress began to emerge as a very important political party in Manipur. However, the election result of 1948 gave serious setback to the policy and programmes of the Manipur State Congress. Before this election they strongly believed that they were the spokesman of the people of Manipur. Therefore they felt that they would be able to get a strong support from the people. In the election result of fifty-three seats the Manipur State Congress secured only thirteen seats and their member was increased to fourteen after the defection of Shri Sinam Bijoy Singh from Jiribam Assembly Constituency. First he was elected as a candidate of Manipur Krishak Sabha. From the election result it was quite clear that the Manipur State Congress was not the most popular party in Manipur. It is observed that the failure of the Manipur State Congress to form Government in 1948 had probably disappointed not only the State Congress but also the Indian National Congress and greatly effected its integration. (A history of the Manipur Congress party in Manipur an unpublished work). It further observed that had the Congress party formed the government the process of the merger of Manipur within Indian Union might have been

accomplished the same year. Whatever opinion it may be but is a fact that after this result the leaders of the Manipur State Congress began to understand their position among the people and so they immediately began to adopt certain political step for the fulfillment of their objective. As a first step they tried to establish kind of relationship and understanding with the All India Congress Committee. In the meantime a new proposal for the formation of a new state comprising of Manipur, Cachar and Lushai Hills began to emerge in the political scenario of the State. It is said that this plan in reality was direction of the Indian Government and was instantly a plan of Bengali in Cachar who migrated from Sylhet (Memorandum submitted by Congress in 1955 to State Reorganization Committee) and so the proposal was initiated by the Cachar District Congress to safeguard their interest quite adequately (Ibid). It is further said that the proposal was received with mixed reaction and only a small section of the Manipur State congress led by E. Tompok and his party supported the proposal. (A memorandum on the creation of new state Pt-I). Whatever the case it may be but it can be suggested that the emergence of this proposal gave a very good opening to the Manipur State Congress for the establishment of a direct contact with the leaders of the Congress Party of India. In order to give a proper shape to their plan they invited Dr. Prafula Chandra Ghose, an eminent Congress leader of Bengal to Manipur. A public meeting was arranged for him by the Manipur State Congress on 22nd August at Imphal Pologround. In the said meeting, Dr. Prafula Chandra Ghose, by supporting the Purbachal theory stressed that "Manipur State in order to make equilibrium, according to the motto of the Congress required to be amalgamated with the three places, Tripura, Cachar and Lushai Hills" (Report of the police regarding the Public meeting held on 22.8.48 at Pologround). After this meeting, the political situation of the country became very tense. A large section of Manipur was not in favour of the proposal. On the 18th September, a large public meeting was held in which all the leaders of both hills and plain strongly opposed the proposal of Congress party and declared that the people of Manipur would resist any type of imposition of proposed province. (Resolution No.1 of the meeting of both hills and plain leaders held under the chairmanship of Mr. M. Panjat Singh). The Government of Manipur was also not in favour of this proposal. As a result of this strong opposition of the majority of the people, the people of Manipur State Congress for the creation of Purbachal State were not materialized. However, in a way it was not a serious setback to the aim and objectives of the Congress party. Rather it can be treated as a great success in their policy and programme because it produced a positive indirect impact in favour of their political line. In fact the idea of Purbachal movement produced two important positive results in favour of Congress party. First it opened a direct contact route between A.I.C.C. and Manipur State Congress and after this they were able to place all types of their political movement in Manipur to the knowledge of leaders of the Congress party of India. Secondly, such type of relationship also gave a great advantageous position to the political leaders of the India as well as to the India Government to interfere in the internal political affairs of Manipur State. In the meantime the people also witness a series of political development in the relationship between the Government of India and Manipur State particularly their repeated interference in the internal affairs of the State. The proposal for the appointment of 'Devan' was the glaring example of their direct interference in the internal affairs of the state. His duty, according to the letters of the India Government, was to watch the treaty obligation between the State and the India dominion. (Letter of Akbar Hyder to the Maharajah Budhachandra of Manipur 2.8.1948). It is also quite

obscure to know that under which special relationship, sir Akbar Hyder expressed his desire to give the responsibility of 'Dewanship' to Maharajkumar Priyobarta Singh who was the younger brother of the King. However, his proposal was not materialized, in the meantime, due to sudden expiry of Akbar Hyder, the responsibility of Government of Assam was given to Shri Prakash. Like his predecessor he also pressed the Maharaj of Manipur to appoint a 'Dewan' Maharaj Budhachandra was not happy and he wanted to know the administrative power of the propose office (letter of the Maharaj of Manipur to the Governor of Assam vide D.O. No. 1986/P 11-1 dt.23.3.49). On the 10th April the Maharaj received a telegraphic message from the Governor about the appointment of Major General Rewal Amar Singh as the Dewan of Manipur and in a letter to the Maharaj the governor of Assam also mentioned the power and function of Dewan. In this respect we can observe serious question which could not be ignored very easily that when the proposal of the appointing 'Dewan' was made by the Government of India through the Governor of Assam why did neither the Maharaj of Manipur nor the member of other political parties make any type of opposition to the move of appointment of 'Dewan' because it was not a part of the Constitution of the Manipur State. Such type of the immature political atmosphere among the political leaders of the State of Manipur also gave a very good opportunity to the Government of India.

In due course the Secret political intrigue between the Manipur State congress party and all India Congress Committee for the integration of India became an open secret and other political parties began to think such movement as serious threat to the political identity of Manipur. The Members of Praja Samiti Sabha in the Legislative Assembly took a strong resolution against the policy of the Manipur State Congress. The Resolution stressed that "If integration or merging be imposed here irrespective of our unfortunate (and) helpless circumstances and (against) the principle of Bapuji without the consent of the people, the present moral submission of the Manipur into India, which is most precious, may disappear bidding good bye to the physical control by imposition and the bitter experiences thereof may be a shortly handicaps in the political races of India with other countries a double loss for India and Manipur. If the people have been sinned against and wronged the people themselves have to watch over in addition to across the frontier" (Resolution of the meeting of MLA's belonging to the Praja Samiti Sabha, on 25-8-49 under the chairmanship of Kh. Ibotombi). Thus the members of Praja Samiti has tactfully stood against the merger. But Manipur State Congress gave three points arguments in favour of their pro-merger stand. The points were (i) the inability of the Government of Manipur to tackle the law and order situation of Manipur (ii) the apprehension from the communist movements in Burma. (3) the integration of Manipur and India would bring peace and development.

Keeping this view with consideration, they even decided by the meeting of the 29th April 1949 to send a delegation of three members to meet the leaders of AICC for immediate integration of Manipur into India. From these above evidence it can be observed that the role of the leaders of the Manipur State Congress was the pre-dominant factor for the coming direct interference of the India Government in the internal administrative offices of the State and integration of Manipur with India. And the congress parties of Manipur adopt a different stand, the India Government and leader of AICC could not be able to adopt such kinds of undemocratic policies towards Manipur.

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