



Study on the nature of democratic movement led by Hijam Irawat Singh

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Abstract:

Hijam Irawat or Inaneta Irawat (as he is popularly known) has been described as a legendary leader for his contributions in the development of social, political, economic and administrative sphere of the state since the 19th century. He was the pioneer of socio-political movement in Manipur. Irawat was born on 30 September 1896, at Pishum Thoung Oinam Leikai, Imphal in a middle class family.

He showed various events prevailing in the soil of Manipur which was imposed by the colonial authority and native ruler. They imposed feudal system like forced labour, Pothang, House Tax and religious ceremonies Tax etc. Meanwhile, after the end of First World War, the struggle for Indian independence against the colonial governments was picking up momentum. This freedom movement which was spreading throughout the country ultimately reached Manipur. The people of Manipur also started movements for developments of socio-political and economic conditions and demanded for the establishment of a responsible government in the state.

Indeed, Irawat was inspired by the Indian national leader Balgangdar Tilak. Irawat wanted to make reform in Manipur as an ardent patriot. He was the first persons in Manipur to wear Khadar cloth. Irawat was a man of personalities in various fields like journalist, sportsman, dramatist and a pioneer of Manipur literature etc. Some important initiatives of Hijam Irawat in the socio-political movement of Manipur can be seen from his involvement in various organisations and associations, political, social as well as cultural.

Irawat worked not only among men but also among the womenfolk. Wherever he went, he built up the Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti. In the latter half of 1944 when a crisis of scarcity of yam occurred on account of the hoarding by the dealers, Irawat's guidance enabled the Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti to organize an agitation of the womenfolk consisting mostly of the Meitei, the Bishnupriya and the Burman communities. His belief in the democratic values was second to none, for which he struggled till the last.

Irawat took vital role in the democratic process of election in the State. The first election under the newly drafted Manipur Constitution Act 1947 was held in 1948, even before the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union. Indeed the election became the first democratic system in the state before the merger and also the first in the country after independence.

I:Introduction

Hijam Irawat was the harbinger of political awakening in Manipur (Bhubon, H, 1988). Irawat started working in Manipur without forming the Communist Party. With the then prevailing situation as the backdrop, without losing much time Irawat cautiously started contacting his close associates and chalking out the next phase of the political struggle in Manipur. Chatradhari opines that the situation of Manipur, when Irawat returned was like a goods train without engine, lying on the track where all the goods were exposed to the elements of nature. Irawat acted like the engine that arrived to take the goods to the intended destination. The political awakening symbolised by the fourth session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (NHMM) developed into political movement and led into the historic Nupilan movement (Sotinkumar, L, 2013). Irawat spread his political movement not only in Manipur, but also in the Surma Valley (Surma Valley is the collective name for pre-independence Cachar and Sylhet Districts) (Sanajaoba, R.K., Hijam, 2015).

On 13th October, 1939, Churachand Singh, Maharaja of Manipur was questioning the Darbar for allowing Irawat to canvass members of the Mahasabha as the President of NMM and its members giving speeches everywhere. He further stated that when he (Maharaja Churachand) was the President, the Mahasabha was known as NHMM and recognised by the State. He questioned whether it was justifiable that the Mahasabha had changed its name and creed, and was exciting his subjects by giving objectionable speeches? He expressed his desire for the Darbar to take necessary actions to ensure that the „undesirable activities“ of the Mahasabha should not be seen or heard. This letter was written by the ruler of the Manipur State to the Darbar when Irawat was leading the Democratic Movement in Manipur as a Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha (NMM) NMM or Congress man.

1.1 Background

The proposed study analyzes the varied socio-religious and political movements in the Manipur valley during the period of colonial princely rule. Besides, pre-colonial socio-economic and political conditions are also brought in to situate this study. The time frame of the study begins with the year 1934, when the first socio-religious organization, Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha was formed. The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha was an indication of emergent social and political consciousness represented by a middle class intelligentsia for modern Manipur. The study goes on till Manipur's integration as an

integral part of the Indian Dominion in 1951. The work restricts its horizon within the confines of the Manipur valley and its scope embraces the major socio-religious and political movements during the period (Singh, Karam Manimohan, 2018). Nevertheless, the analysis also includes the pre-colonial socio-economic and political situation and its subsequent transformation during the colonial-princely rule.

1.2 Importance of the study:

Indeed in the said period Irabot did played a significant role in bringing socio-political reforms in the state. And this initiative did in a way help in starting the wheel of political modernisation in Manipur. The various socio-political movements started during the said period had great significance in creating the basic foundation for development of the political modernisation process (Singh, Karam Manimohan, 2018). All the activities associated with the movements helped in bringing the required unity, integrity, communication and consciousness of the people and an understanding their socio-political, economic and administration, which supported the people to ascent the modern way of life. In this physical world people needs movement or agitations for a changing society without the exception of Manipur. This chapter tried to highlight Hijam Irabot's role in the socio-political, economic and administrative development of the state and its entrant to modern life. He was a significant personality whose work contributed in accelerating the process of bringing political modernisation in Manipur.

Here, the matter that needs to be perused is why was Irabot consider significant in the political transformation process of the state during that time. Indeed, he was responsible for multi-dimensional changes that were never ever witnessed before in the Manipuri society. He brought revolutionary shifts in diverse aspects of the society including political consciousness among the general masses, social reformation, girls' education, cultural renaissance, intellectual upheaval, economic lifestyle etc. He protested against the various discriminations existing in the society due to the apathy of the authority. He wanted the taxes levied on social and religious practices stopped. In a way he became a sort of harbinger in the political evolution of Manipur because, in a sense, he inculcated the importance of political consciousness for bringing all round socio-cultural and economic development of the society. What is to be noted here is that political modernisation theory emphasise that any effort towards socio-cultural and economic changes need to be associated with development in the political sphere. Thus, this period starting with the coming of the British and going till the early part of the country's independence, inclusive of the special contribution of Irabot, knowingly or unknowingly helped the people

(inclusive of both the valley and the hills) of Manipur to be more aware of the modern political institutions and adapt themselves to the political systems gradually.

Irabot Singh was a significant figure in the history of modern Manipur. He was one of those who played key role in bringing new ideas in Manipur. As a reformer, he had urged for social and political emancipation of women. But, his extreme political position i.e., armed struggle and socialism isolated him.

1.3 Irawat Democratic Movement in Manipur

Irabot was elected as the President and Ibocha Kabiraj as the Secretary of the said organisation. Some of the important resolutions of the new organization were as given below:

i)Responsible government should be established;ii)Election through adult Franchise should be adopted;iii)Gram Panchayat should be established in each village;iv)A school should be established in each village;v)Free compulsory primary education;vi)A health centers in each village;vii)Set up post office in each village;viii)Provide irrigation facilities for each village;ix)To protect the land of tillers.

The main objective of organisation was to uplift of the economic conditions of the common people. Their aim and objective was to create the basic foundation for a socialist revolution which would bring improvement in the economy of the people.

Irawat was released from Sylhet Jail on 20th March, 1943. Irawat's release from Sylhet Jail and formally became a Communist. However, he was not allowed to enter Manipur due to the refusal on the part of Bodhachandra, the Maharaja of Manipur. The reason for the indifferent attitude of the ruling dynasty towards communist Irawat was not a surprise one.

When Irawat returned to Manipur in first week of March, 1946, after his imprisonment in 1941, at Sylhet Jail and subsequent exile in the Surma Valley, together for about 5 years (if the period has to be counted from the date of his admission to the Sylhet Jail, i.e., 21st March, 1941 till 4th March, 1946), Manipur was in very bad condition in all respects due to the Second World War(Sanajaoba, R.K., Hijam,2015). The Manipur, he saw, was a war ravaged, mass displacement of population, pestilence, a shattered economy, no regular food supply line, very high inflation, the general population without any viable means of livelihood and so on. On top of that, Manipur had witnessed the lack of political leadership to guide the people from the untold suffering.

Undaunted from the strong and negative criticisms, sometimes to the level of ludicrousness, hurled on him from the side of his ex-associates Irawat carried on with the task of leading the democratic movement in Manipur. He presided a meeting of the

Working Committee, Manipur Praja Sanmelaan on 4th August, 1946. Resolutions were passed for the fulfillment of the long felt want of the people of the State, for setting up the Legislative Assembly, under the spirit of the proclamation of the Cabinet Mission and the Chamber of Princes; and also for objecting the re-entry of the Marwaris i.e., the profiteers after thoroughly discussing Resolution Nos. 3, 9 and 11 of the Second Session of the MKS was endorsed by North Eastern side branch meeting of the MKS held at the Pungdongbam Basti Mandap on Friday, the 16th August, 1946.

Irawat infused a sense of democratic centralism in all the organisations he led. This can be seen from the functioning of branch level units of various organisations, provided with a clear sense of liberty to discuss and accept or reject any resolution adopted by the centre.

Irawat, the President of the Manipur Praja Sanmelaan had issued an appeal, addressed to the public on 15th August, 1946. He stated that when people were yet to overcome the suffering of the war another suffering came in the form of flood. Prices of the essential commodities were still very high. Under the Government controlled and State supplied salt, oil, sugar, cloth, yarn there was inadequacy and disparity in the supply of those goods between urban and rural areas. While a litre of kerosene being supplied for every household in a month was not adequate in Imphal areas, in the rural areas only $\frac{1}{4}$ litre was being supplied (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993). For salt, in some areas a household received 5 kg a month, while in some areas less than 1 kg was received and so on.

With the upsurge of democratic movement in the post-war era, the consolidation of democratic forces in Manipur became a necessity. In this regard, Manipur Praja Sanmelaan and the Manipur Praja Mandal, the two organisations having similar aims and objectives organised a joined meeting of the Parishad and workers on Wednesday the 21st August, 1946, at the mandap (a temple porch) of Gouramani Sharma, at Kwakeithel, Imphal (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993:58). Irawat had taken a leading role in the merger of these two organisations. This can be seen from his speech given at the opening of the meeting. As the President of the Manipur Praja Sanmelaan he dwelled at length on the conditions of British India and the Indian Native States, present and future, under the present state of political affairs; on the political and economic conditions of Manipur, past and present, on the common demand by the Manipuri people for the Responsible Government which was included in the Indian struggle for independence.

Even though Irawat was no longer associated with the NMM the two organisations discussed thoroughly the Resolution No. 10 of the 9th August, 1946, of the Mahasabha in which an invitation was made to all the Sabhas and Samities of the people to join it, for

making a common demand under a united strain, to fulfill the only common demand of the people – Establishment of a Responsible Government and a legislature in Manipur. He delved further on some of the progress made towards this under NMM and Manipur Praja Sanmelaan. He also touched on the issue of the re-entrance of the Marwaris and supply in Manipur. By this meeting the two organisations were merged into a new organisation called Manipur Praja Sangha (MPS).

Soon it carried forward the earlier movements under the leadership of Irawat (Karam Manimohan, 1989). A meeting was called for all the supply committees, dealers and interested persons with regards to the supply of essential commodities such as salt, oil, sugar, cloth and yarn, on Thursday the 29th August, 1946, at the mandap of Damodar Paul, Keishamthong, Imphal (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993).

The peasants of Manipur demanded for their greater participation in the proposed democratic setup of the State. The Awang Jiri Branch Committee of the MKS held its meeting on 7th September, 1946. Among others, it appealed to the Maharaja of Manipur to make an announcement for the setting up of the Constitution Making Body and for taking representative from the MKS in it. This is rather interesting from the fact that a rural peasant branch committee started taking active participation in the general politics of the State. It is a hallmark of the initiatives taken up by Irawat.

In a meeting of the Parishad of the MPS held on 6th November, 1946, at the residence of Ibungotombi, Keishamthong, Imphal, pressed for immediate redressal of many problems people were facing (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993). It addressed the issues of the hardship faced by the people of Manipur from the terrible spectre of unemployment, high prevalence of black marketing, devastation of houses from recurrent flood, lack of means of livelihood due to death of embroidery and handicrafts, which was once Manipuris' means of livelihood, from the scarcity of supply of yarn and other materials, thus leaving land as the only mainstay of the people and so on. A copy of the resolution was forwarded to the Governor of Assam for necessary action and favourable order signed by Irawat, General Secretary, MPS.

The State Congress made its first ever political demand with the submission of on 7th November, 1946, the Resolution No. 5 adopted on its 1st November 1946 Working Committee meeting, to the Maharaja of Manipur by Bhubansana Rajkumar, President of the party. It was a demand for the establishment of the Legislative Assembly in Manipur. The same demand had already been made on 4th August, 1946, in a meeting of the Working Committee of the Manipur Praja Sanmelaan under the Chairmanship of Irawat. Prior to that

a similar demand or rather demands had been made by the Second Conference of the MKS held on 19th May, 1946, in the form of resolutions No. 12., and 13., respectively, viz., “Establishment of full responsible Government in Manipur”, and “Election should be held on the basis of universal adult franchise”. In addition to that, another resolution which could be considered as a farsighted one was, Resolution No. 14. “Join administration of hills and valley”, was also adopted. Therefore, it was not a new demand and had been made by different parties or organisations associated with Irawat. All these show that it was Irawat who was leading the democratic Movement in Manipur irrespective of party or parties he belonged to.

The MPS continued to redress the grievances of the people in a meeting held at Khurai Konsam Leikai on Sunday, the 10th November, 1946. It adopted a resolution supporting the memorandum submitted to the Maharaja of Manipur and the Governor of Assam demanding the reduction of taxes on land, and highlighting the pitiable condition of the people of the State due to lack of economic opportunities.

It is remarkable to note that Irawat was mostly working in the capacities of Secretary of MPS and President of MKS in tandem. The Working Committee Meeting of the MKS was held on Monday, the 11th November, 1946, at Laishram Mandap, near Nambol Market. It addressed on wide ranging issues such as, appeal for the amelioration of the people of Jiribam; demand for increase in the amount of rationing of essential commodities, demand for appropriate punishment of black marketers; appeal for the fulfillment of the reduction of taxes on landed properties; immediate repairing of the road stretch leading to Sagolmang from Sawombung; a common pool of granary for the Krisak members; raisin of volunteer force in each of the branch committees of the MKS; and so on.

With the ever increasing pressure from several political parties and organisations, Bodhchandra, the Maharaja of Manipur could no longer remain silent on the issues of the constitutional reforms in the State. He thought that it was necessary to introduce some steps in the light of the statements made by the Viceroy and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, where people of Manipur would be associated with his Government, which would be both popular and responsive to the general-will of the people. Towards that end he was prepared to sanction the formation of an Elected Advisory Assembly, represented by both the Hills and Valley with a certain proportion of Members elected to his Executive Council and the remaining Members nominated by him. However, he thought that the normal form of direct election was not suited to the conditions of Manipur and

therefore, it should be based on nomination of reliable men, elected by their fellows. They could be vested with the power to elect candidates to the Assembly.

While the movement for the establishment of the constitutional reform and other struggles were going on in Manipur, Irawat went back to Assam to address a worker's union meeting held at Lumding, in the first week of December, 1946.

Earlier, the MKS held a Working Committee meeting on 18th August, 1947, presided by Irawat. The meeting discussed the alleged threat made by Gouramani Sharma, leader of the Bhuban Congress that he would kick with boot on the face of Madhumangol Singh, General Secretary of the MKS, in front of everyone which would be announced. Gouramani's act was condemned as ungentlemanly, unbecoming of a leader, branding him as a pseudo leader.

Following this incident, the Manipur Praja Sangha held a meeting on 21st August, 1947, presided by Nongmaithem Budhichandra Singh. With the objective of facing any untoward danger, a Fighting Front of the Sangha was formed by the meeting. It was known as FFCPS in English. A committee was formed for carrying out the activities of the front, comprised of 22 members. Laishram Kanhai was elected as the President of the front, Khundrakpam Amu as the General Secretary, Budhichandra as the Cashier, Narottam as the Joint Secretary.

Amidst that the MKS, carried out never ending of various forms for the cause of the exploited, poor peasant masses of Manipur (Karam Manimohan, 1989). For those kinds of movement, due to the requirement for an efficient and disciplined volunteer force, the Volunteer Camp held in 1947 at Pandu in Assam. It was attended by Thokchom Boro and Langoljam Tiken. It was led by the leader of the group known as the "Chittagong Armoury Raid", Ganesh Ghose, a Bengali revolutionary (Singh, N. Joykumar, 2005). Along with the military training, political classes were also conducted. Most of the volunteers attended were railway workers. Many peasant leaders of Cachar and Tripura also participated. They were mostly from Assam circle. As the consequence of attending that Camp, in Manipur also for MKS, by imparting volunteer training in many areas a big volunteer force was created.

A big meeting of the MKS attended by the representatives of all the Branch Committees and other people numbering around 2000 was held on Sunday, the 7th September, 1947, at the mandap (temple porch) of Amuyaima Sharma, near the Nambol Market, presided by Irawat. It passed a resolution for the adequate and impartial distribution of all the essential items to the people.

On Sunday, the 21st September, 1947, at 5 p.m. the MPS held a large public meeting at Police Lane, presided by Irawat, attended by Manipuri subjects from Hindus, Muslims and Hills communities, numbering over 20,000. The meeting discussed in detail about the Satyagraha in Manipur and later adopted the following resolutions: The people of Manipur demanded for Full Responsible Government; Popular Interim Government; Removal of Pass system for the entry of foreigners. The meeting fully endorsed the demands of the Satyagraha, which was started due to the non-honouring of the Indian National Flag and pledged to support it with adequate man-power, money etc. He urged to fulfill the demands for the peace of the State. On 8th and 9th November, 1947, the Assam POC of the CPI, in a meeting adopted a resolution on the Manipur Satyagraha. It sent its greetings to the people of Manipur State, who were waging a struggle against the autocratic State authority for establishing Responsible Government and the abolition of disgraceful „Pass“ system. It condemned the repressive measures let loosed to suppress the just movement and expressed its vehement protest against the threat of using Indian troops, viz., the 4th Assam Rifles, against the struggling people. It put that the State authority were simply pursuing the hated British methods of drowning peoples“ voice.

On Sunday, the 16th November, 1947, the Praja Party, a royalist party, called a public meeting at the Polo Ground Imphal (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993:58). Irawat, in spite of his suspicion about the motive of the party, attended as he received an invitation from the Secretary of the Praja Party. In the meeting, supposedly held for bringing peace in Manipur, Irawat was not allowed to speak (Bhubon, H, 1988). The said meeting turned out to be a farce; its real intention was to project the autocratic-bureaucratic IGM, as a democratic government to the outside world. It was a ploy on the part of the Government to suppress the democratic aspirations of the people of the State. At the same time, the MPS categorically criticised the manner in which the Tompok faction of the MCP had organised the Satyagraha, as it was a unilateral action of a faction of Congress with an eye for garnering seats in the ministry of the IGM. Had it been a genuinely democratic movement it would have had invited all the political parties in Manipur (Bhubon, H, 1988). Therefore, people were appealed not to be misled by those few power hungry, self-centered and opportunist sections who donned Gandhi cap but royalist at heart.

On 12nd December, 1947, at 2 p.m., the Manipur Mahila Sanmelani held the 12th December Day celebration meeting at the M.D.U. Hall, Imphal, presided by Khumbongmayum Jati Devi (Ibobi, A. (ed) 1993:58). Resolutions were adopted for saving

handloom; counting of the number of looms in the localities; formation of a Co-operative Society for procuring yarn; establishment of branches of the Society in all the localities etc.

1.4 Statement of the problem:

Irawat's political objective regarding the self-determination of Manipur was a Free Manipur inside Free India, where the Manipuris would be able to freely develop their own educational, cultural, political and economic aspects freely. The people of Free Manipuri State was to decide by votes whether it would remain alone or would affiliate to any province of Free India. The political objective is testified by the sixth resolution of the joint meeting of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the Manipur Praja Mandal. This standpoint was strengthened when the Manipur Praja Sangha and the Manipur Krishak Sabha under Irawat's leadership stood for a separate Manipur and opposed the Congress organisational province consisting of Cachar, Tripura, Lushai Hills and Manipur and the Purbanchal Pradesh, the administrative province conforming to the said organisational province projected by P.C. Ghosh and other protagonists.

The political movement undertaken by Irawat may be periodically categorised as follows:

- I. Pre-Second World War political movement in Manipur,
- II. Political movement in the Surma Valley,
- III. Post-Second World War political movement in Manipur.

Different facets of Irawat as a humanistic revolutionary:

(a) Founder of first people's organization in Manipur

(b) People's service:

(c) Second women movement:

(d) Revolutionary movement:

1.5 Objectives of the present study:

Ideology that sustains the objective is a set of ideas held by the concerned social group or leadership that purports to explain some or all aspects of a contextual social reality; historical situation that builds up the objective and policies or action programme for realizing the projected goal. On the one side, ideology is the picture portraying the social reality, justification of the objective and means towards achieving the movement's goal. As has been observed, "an ideology interprets an historical situation from the perspective of a group or class in order to legitimate its social movement".

1.To Study the life history of Hijam Irawat.

- 2.To analyse the role of Irawat in the developments for good administration and people. Administration from the Maxian approach of social change.
- 3.To analyse the role of Irawat in the second women movement in Manipur.
- 4.To analyse the nature of democratic movement led by Hijam Irawat Singh
- 5).To analyse the role of Irawat in the Social movements during 2nd world war
- 6).Toanalyse the role of Irawat in the jail reform movement
- 7).To analyse the role of Irawat in the in sports movement
- 8).To analyse the role of Irawat in the young communist party etc
- 9).To analyse the role of Irawat in armed revolutionary movement in the period of 1948-1951.

II:Literature Review

Literature on social movements in Manipur is comparatively scanty comparing with the rest of India. I do not intend to repeat unnecessarily the vast literature on social movements across the length and breadth of India. The conceptual framework developed is based on the reading of the contextual social movements. In the case of Manipur, there are two types of socio-religious movements: reformation and revivalist. The crux of the reform movement revolved around the royally patronized hegemonic brahmanical intervention in the socio-religious life of the people. It was a self mobilization for a change in the social structure or a new kind of social formation based on democratic values. The revivalist one, anti-brahmanical domination and anti Hinduism, was aimed at rediscovering the pristine culture of the Meiteis.

Some previous contributions tried to explore the area of social movements of the northeast India particularly Manipur; yet there are many shortfalls. Many individuals have worked in the styles to substitute theoretical frameworks to the empirical data or directly fitting of this empirical data into the theoretical framework. This style of movement analysis is misleading for the simple reason that it fails to capture the complexities of intrinsic social actuality.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The fate of the movement has relation with the type of leadership that governs it. In the case of a charismatic leadership, mobilization tends to be spontaneous and it is 'invigorated' under 'de-centralized leadership' thereby expanding the movement's area of catchment. The organization, besides being a networking basis between the leadership and the cadre, is a pivot in shouldering the overall administration, supervision and

implementing action programme of the movement. On the other side, translating effectively the target of achieving the objective of the movement largely hinges on the cadre's 'firm commitment to the movement's ideology. Hence, it could be argued that the movement's fate is squarely related to the firmly developed ideology and its effective translation in 'empirical realities' via an organizational structure that executes the action programme. It could be contended that a pragmatic realization of the movement's projected goal has more meaning to the inculcation of a 'firm commitment to its ideology' by the cadre as well as an effectively synchronized organizational basis. The fate of the movement greatly depends upon the pattern of co-ordination among the actors of the movement. Furthermore, a movement may be either formal or informal signifying that a movement may originate un-organizationally then turns to organization by the necessities confronted during the course of the struggle. Or it may begin organizationally from the very beginning. So far as the means of the movement are concerned, it could be democratic or radical depending upon a number of reasons. In addition, the action programme framed up and cultivated as a part of achieving the target, is all inseparable.

Conventional theoretical framework perceives social movement as a sustained collective action aims at transforming 'established relations' or 'established system of relationship' or a change in 'social norms and social institutions' in a given social system.

Apart from these significant theoretical frameworks, there are more conceptual and theoretical issues of a social movement which need to be stressed such as objective sustained by ideology, membership, norms, structure, action programme, means, stages, and internal dynamics. The objective sustained by its ideology occupies a position of centrality for the simple reason that it is the prime mover of any social movement that builds up 'a collective sense of identity' or 'solidarity' among the various actors of the movement as well as connects politically oriented beliefs and action.

2.2 Review of Literature:

I.Pre-Second World War Political Movement In Manipur

Two events served as the preparatory stages for the emergence of the political awakening and political movement in Manipur (Sotinkumar, L. 2013). The first is the resistance movement launched by Laikhuram Khagendrajit Singh inspired by the satyagraha movement of Mahatma Gandhi. During the movement against water tax, Khagendrajit founded the Nikhil Manipur Praja (NMP) in 1932. The movement resulted in the arrest of nine leaders out of whom six including Khagendrajit were given jail terms. On their release from the jail in April 1936 Irawat met Khagendrajit and discussed the emerging political

scenario. This period of Khagendrajit's social movement may be characterized as the proto-political period of social movement. After staying about a year in the Imphal Central Jail, Irawat was transferred to the Sylhet Central Jail(Ibobi,A.(ed)1993:58).

II. Political movement in the surma valley

In the Sylhet jail Irawat had a new experience of the interactions of the Gandhin thought and the Marxist-Leninist thought. Congress leaders of Assam, viz., Arun Kumar Chanda, Rabindra Aditya, Dakshina Ranjan Gupta etc. and Communist leaders, viz., Achintya Bhattacharya, Radharanjan Deb., Chanchal Kumar Sharma etc, came to be lodged in the same jail. In the jail there were arguments between the Congress and the Communist prisoners regarding the character of the Second World War and about the possible victory of the Allied Powers(Sanajaoba, R.K., Hijam,2015). Thus, Irawat could study the points of difference between the Congress and the Communist Party on the national and international questions. Irawat could study the principle of Marxism-Leninism from the literature provided by his communist co-prisoners. He freed himself of the ramifications of deep Vaishnavite and Gandhian conceptions to accept the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. He was attracted most by the way of the problem of nationalities was solved in the Soviet Union and the CPI Programme in this regard was to his liking. Thus, Irawat made his choice and effected his philosophical and political transformation in the Sylhet Jail. Irawat was released from the Sylhet Jail on 20 March 1943. Although released from the jail he was banned from entering Manipur in view of his being a member of the Communist Party for the duration of the Second World War. Irawat's activities in the Surma Valley were multi-faceted and manifold but were linked organically(Singh, Karam Manimohan,2018).

His activities in the Surma Valley may be categorized as follows :- (i) Political and kisan work, (ii) Cultural activities, (iii) Women's organization. (i) Political and kisan work Communist leaders of Sylhet consulted with central and provincial leaders (i.e. Bengal Provincial Committee) and decided that Irawat should stay and work in the Manipur-dominated areas of the Surma Valley, particularly in the Cachar district.Irawat went to all Manipuri villages in Cachar district as well as Sylhet district. Staying at Silchar, he did a lot of work to strengthen the Kisan Sabha(Sanajaoba, R.K., Hijam,2015). Its mass influence grew as Irawat took up kisan work in Cachar. In 1943 Irawat attended the seventh All India Kisan Conference at Bhakna Kalan in the Punjab Province (2-4 April 1943) as a member of delegation of the Surma Valley Kisan Sabha. Among many resolutions the seventh Conference offered areetinas to the heroic Red Army of the Soviet

Union and Dledaed its support to the people of China in their war against Japanese imperialism. The All India Kisan Sabila .

The second event was the social reform movement, a natural sequel to the intellectual and cultural initiated by Irawat, which was only a prequel to the people's political movement against the British paramountcy. Conceived during the Mandalay session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (NHMM) on 28 February, 1 and 2 March 1937, the social reform movement had its epitome in the movement against the Brahmasabha, chaired by the Maharaja. After his return from Burma, Irawat combined with Khagendrajit and launched a movement against Amang-Asheng — a practice of ex-communication enforced by the Brahmasabha. Just after the movement against Amang-Asheng Khagendrajit and all the activists of the NMP joined the NHMM(Singh,N.Joykumar,2005). In the fourth session of the NHMM a momentous metamorphosis in the perspective and objectives of the organization occurred. The communal qualifier 'Hindu' was removed from the nomenclature of the organization. The other momentous transformation was the taking up of political struggle by adopting the demand for responsible government. The session strongly condemned the repressive measures against those people in the states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Dhenkanal etc. who carried on agitations for fulfilment of their demands. The Mahasabha also demanded the establishment of a legislative council for the attainment of a representative form of government. The fourth session also passed other political demands also. On the economic condition the Mahasabha resolved that in order to improve the economic condition and to enable to control the market an all-Manipuri Khadi Sangha be established by starting khadi pratisthans in the villages of Manipur and by propagating khadi culture(Khetri,Rajendra,2006:230). In February 1939 the NMM forwarded an English translation of the resolutions passed in the fourth session to the President , Manipur State Durbar (PMSD for consideration and necessary actions. The PMSD promptly responded by banning all state servants to take part in the NMM or to assist it in any way. Maharaja Churachand cut all off all connections with the NMM. Most of the state servants who were members of the NMM voluntarily resigned from the Mahasabha. Only two persons, viz., Hijam Irawat Sisng and Elangbam Tompok chose to sacrifice to their official positions for the people's cause. Irawat resigned from his post of Sadar Panchayat Member and gave up his wife's landed property. Tompok resigned from his post clerk in the Revenue Department. In November 1939 Irawat as the President of the NMM submitted an outline of the legislature to the Maharaja and the Governbment of Assam.The outline envisaged a unicameral legislature of 100 members of which not less

than 80 were to be elected and 20 to be nominated by His Highness, corruption-free election and voting secret ballot and several other features. In the year 1939 Irawat had become an activist of the Indian National Congress. Before the outbreak of the Nuoilan in December 1939. Irawat paid a visit to Silchar on 12 November and stayed there till 14 (Singh, Karam Manimohan, 2018)

III: Research Methodology

In this work, researcher has departed from both these two types of analytical models. An attempt has been made, herein, to grasp the social reality of the movement from its own 'inner perspective'. Here, the study of social movements is based on the assumption that every social structure creates its own mode of expression and style of protest. Nevertheless, we draw upon the theoretical frameworks already developed for the analysis of the various types of the movements. This case study of Manipur has been refined by making a comparative analysis with the other theoretical constructs which have been evolved from their corresponding social movements in other areas. The current attempt is rooted in historical perspective.

The work is designed to re-assess the proposed area and the previous perceptions and approaches. Methodologically, writing this thesis with a historical perspective is based on the information from primary and secondary sources.

A variety of sources were employed for a historical analysis in a manner to survey the unexplored area of study. There are always limits to exploration and treatment of any new material. The manuscripts demand that their texts may be read 'against the grain'.

IV: Analysis

4.1 Analysis

In Indian context, Indian sociologists' initiatives in analyzing the social movement started in the sixties and acquired a greater momentum in the mid seventies. Before it, Indian historians had endeavoured social movement studies rather in a more chronological framework. But their attempts failed to treat the historical data in terms of formulating either theorization or conceptual framework. This vacuum was filled up by the sociological interventions. The sociologists treat the historical data with sociological enquiry. For example, birth of two key concepts of historicity and dialectic of social process by the sociological readings on social movements help researchers across disciplines in movement studies.

Hijam Irabot Singh As A Representative Of Modern Manipur. For a convenient analysis, life and activities of Irabot Singh could broadly be classified into three stages, namely (a) Early stage: as a multifaceted personality in the making of modern Manipur and as a pioneering social reformer; (b) first phase of active political life; (c) last stage of active political life.

However, as a social reformer, Irabot, Singh, instead of being a loyalist collaborator of the feudal system, used his position to go along with the people, studied their hardships and organized mass mobilization for their general uplift.

A very promising contribution of Irabot Singh as a social reformer was his crusade to reform the socio-religious ills which began to surface in the society as a result of manipulations by the orthodox Brahmanism.

The Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha, a socio-religious organization, was transformed into a political party, Nikhil Manipur Mahasabha³⁴ with the prime objective of social reforms and political democratization in the state. In actual association with Tompok, Irabot Singh plunged into the Mahasabha activities.

Irabot Singh, as a matter of fact, was one of the personalities of the entire northeast region who was immensely influenced by the social and political writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Lokmanya Tilak.

Taking a cue of all these developments Irabot thought that it was a right time to work for the people of Manipur. He found experience from the Dacca and other states of India. He had the knowledge of the Swadeshi movement in 1905 while he was in Cachar. There Swadeshi movement was launched under the leader of Kamini Kumar Chand. After he return Irabot too launched swadeshi movement in Manipur. He burnt foreign cloth and made bonfires of the foreign cigarette at Buri Bazar and Oinam Bazar. He along with other members of the Nikhil Manipuri.

Mahasaba also boycotted the cigarette distributors of the Imperial tobacco company of India limited at the Maxwell Bazar Imphal.

He heard about Tilak when he was in Dhaka. Irabot described him as his Political Guru. As such a biography of Balganagdar Tilak was published in a serial wise manner by him. Irabot also learnt the meaning of Swadeshi and Swaraj for the first time from Lokmanya Tilak while he was in Dacca. The start of Non-cooperation movement in 1922 in India³⁶ was a turning point in his life and fight for freedom.

4.2 Major Findings:

Widely hitherto accepted views about Irawat's parentage, birth place, genealogy and clan allegiance is now contested. His egalitarian concept was imbued in his works. From his early life till the attainment of his adulthood, he carried forward this ideal. Born in a poor family and apparently brought up in a harsh environment, perhaps made him harden his resolved to struggle for equality for one and all. As in other parts of British India, the wave of noncooperation inspired his political dream, for the achievement of independence in its entirety.

Irawat had taken a yeoman service in the Communist Movement of the North East region of India. During his exile days in the Surma Valley (March, 1943- March, 1946) he played a crucial role in furthering the cause of the movement throughout the region. He continued his activities in the region after his return to Manipur also (Sanajaoba, R.K., Hijam, 2015). On the other hand, during the underground phase (September, 1948-September, 1951) he led the movement in Manipur and lent his hand in forging a lasting peace among various Communist parties of Burma (Myanmar), which made him as one of the tallest Communist leaders in this part of the world. His vision was not confined to narrow nationalism, but transcended into an Internationalist, which is a necessary characteristic of a Communist revolutionary. While Irawat Singh was in Cachar, the Nupilal broke out in Manipur. The outbreak had its immediate cause in the rise of the price of rice.

He observed that it was not an agitation of the women but a movement of the people. He appealed to the people to launch civil disobedience movement in the form of non-payment of land revenue, utilizing the hills and lakes without any payment, etc. The said meeting proved to be a watershed in the people's movement.

one of the most significant movements in colonial- princely Manipur, the so called 'Second Women's War', which started towards the end of 1939 and continued till the arrival of the World War II in 1942.

The second women's agitation began with the demand for complete stoppage of rice export from Manipur. The state was undergoing a serious problem of food scarcity due to the failure of harvest as a result of heavy rain.

The movement was considerably slowed down after the arrest of Irabot on the charge of making a seditious speech in the public. He was sentenced to three years of simple imprisonment.

Also, researcher look at continuation of the movement under the leadership of Irabot's followers. The government's policy of repression, emergence of conflict between the two

groups of women agitators, its eventual decline and reforms in the aftermath of the movement are also examined in this paper.

Irabot who was exiled in connection to the Women's Agitation of 1939, was now allowed to enter his home state. After the war, the movement for responsible government, which was one of the strong demands during the Women's Agitation of 1939, again kicked off.

The momentous event came when he was arrested (9th January, 1940) for leading the Second Nupi Lan of 1939-1940, when he was subsequently transferred and lodged in the Sylhet Jail (20th March, 1941). His indoctrination to Marxism began there and when he was released (20th March, 1943), officially became the first Communist from Manipur in 1943 (23rd May to 1st June). Being a member of the CPI, he ardently followed the different policies and programmes the Party adopted from time to time. His belief in the democratic values was second to none, for which he struggled till the last.

It was a great contribution of Irabot Singh to the Burmese Communist Party (BCP). At that time the Burmese army with Air-force attacked the headquarters of BCP Bureau No. 1 under the offensive policy of the UN government. Because of this serious incident Irabot had to cross back the border and entered Manipur but could not reach Manipur. On his way back to Manipur, he was severely attacked by typhoid and fever while he was at Tangbow, at the foothills of Ango Ching in Burma. There itself he died on 26 September 1951 due to the lack of proper treatment.

V: Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion:

Irawat was the harbinger of political awakening in Manipur. Under his intellectual guidance the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha assumed a political profile at its fourth session in 1938. In the year 1939 Irawat Singh had become an activist of the Indian National Congress. Before the outbreak of the Nupilal in December 1939, Irawat Singh paid a visit to Cachar on 12 November and stayed there till 14 December 1939. His visit to Cachar was meant to meet the people inside the Congress organisation and to spread the Congress activities among the Manipuri population. The Mahasabha adopted a secular outlook by dropping the qualifier 'Hindu' from its nomenclature. The fourth session had the imprint of the political struggles conducted by the Indian National Congress in the British India as well as the people in the princely states. When the majority of the

Mahasabha refused to provide leadership to the Nupilan movement, Irawat founded the Manipur Praja Sammelani to provide leadership, which resolved to conduct Civil Disobedience movement in continuation of the Nupilan. When he was arrested on 9 January 1940, the activists of the Sammelani carried on the Civil Disobedience movement. The Assam POC occasionally expressed its support for the democratic movement in Manipur. Its full support to the Manipur Satyagraha, a struggle waged against the autocratic State authority for the establishment of Responsible Government and abolition of the disgraceful „Pass“ system by the people of Manipur was one such instance. However, Irawat had reservation on the unilateral Satyagraha Movement launched by the Tompok faction of the State Congress in November, 1947, on the ground that the motive behind the move was possibly, for garnering ministerial berth in the Interim Government of the State, rather than a genuine desire for establishing 278 democracy. Irawat showed his statesmanship, in quelling the disturbances in the Hill Areas of the State. His initiatives, towards bringing a solution to the vexed problem in the aftermath of the Mao area disturbances, manifest the quality of an able leader. As a result of these Daiho and Modoly slowly retracted from their earlier stand of seceding Mao areas from Manipur.

For Irawat, establishment of democratic system in Manipur means equal participation of all the sections of the people, irrespective of caste, religion, region, language or political orientations. On equal measure, Irawat unmasked the pretensions of the Praja Party, a royalist party, whose intention was ostensibly for the retention of the autocratic rule of the Maharaja of Manipur.

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