

POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND VOTING
BEHAVIOURS IN ASSEMBLY ELECTION (1972-1984),
LILONG CONSTITUENCY, MANIPUR, INDIA

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Abstract

The Lilong Assembly Constituency is one of the 60th Assembly Constituencies in Manipur and also the 30th Assembly constituency in Thoubal District. Manipur, majority of the Muslims/Meitei-pangal inhabited in the Lilong assembly Constituency. The majority of the voters belong to Muslim/Meitei-pangal. This constituency is the only constituency cannot win by other community except minority Muslim. As we know, Manipur was started a real democratic form of Government in the year 1972. As such, peoples could participate into the political system of India. From Monarchial period to democratic form of government voters and political actors of Lilong constituency plays an important role in shaping a new Manipur. Voter of the constituency were not mere spectator in the political arena. The first Chief Minister of Manipur after statehood was from the Constituency. As such, apolitical actor of the constituency played very important roles to shape today's Manipur.

Key words: Assembly, Constituency, Community, Election, Minister, Meitei-pangal, Tribes, Leikai, MPP.

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1. Introduction

The constituency was inhabited by multi-ethnic groups like Muslim/Meitei-pangal, Meiteis and Kabui tribes having rural character. The constituency is located at the central part of Manipur valley having 11kms far away from Imphal city. It is an area where the people particularly the youths and elders generally appear to be more sensitive on socio-economic and political issues and bear both Regionalism and Centralism attitude.

The Lilong constituency is located at Thoubal District and bordering with Imphal West District. Lilong assembly constituency was surrounded by five Assembly constituencies; they are Langthabal Constituency on the North, Thoubal Constituency on the South, Wangoi Constituency on the West and Keirao and Wangkhem Constituencies on the East. The Lilong constituency is comprises of 47 Leikais (local area). The occupations of the people living in the area are mainly cultivation, manufacture, labour, transport and business etc. There are small number of people working in the Government offices, Government undertaking offices, cooperative sectors and private companies. The area is cover under the Municipality and Panchayat administration. As regards, the basic amenities and infrastructures, the villages of the constituency are not good recorded in the District census handbook. There are 24 L.P school, 9 primary school, 4 junior high school, 3 high schools, 1 secondary and 1 college. The condition of the inter village road within the constituency are not in a good condition.

A few inter village roads are pucca road but the roads are damaged due to the recent flood. Since the time of Assembly election of 1972 most of the political leaders can join in the council of ministry except a few election even though the socio-economic infrastructure condition of the constituency were not in a good position, most of the people including youth and elders involved in politics. These are known from their active participation in the past and recent assembly election.

Regionalism has emerged as a strong force in Manipur as she attained statehood in 1972. This nature also felt in the Assembly election of the constituency. In the political history of Manipur, Lilong constituency cannot be neglected because the First Chief Minister of Manipur after statehood was from this Constituency. In 1972 Assembly election Md. Alimuddin was elected as

an MLA from this constituency and became the Chief Minister of Manipur. He was the first minority Chief Minister in Manipur. He has taken many memorable things like:

1. Establishment of BOSEM on 6th September 1972.
2. RIMS was instituted on 22nd September 1972.
3. He laid the foundation stone of Jawaharlal University center on 19th November 1972 and later developed as Manipur University.
4. Manipur Public commission was set up.
5. Manipur Law commission was constituted.
6. 13th August was declare as the patriot day and enlisted in the holiday list of Manipur.
7. Sport complex at Khuman Lampak was established.
8. Double cropping also introduce during his period and many more.

2. Objective and Methods

- The educational qualification, moral character and family background should be the criteria of the candidate.
- Clan system should be abolished and free vote should be maintained.
- Restriction to the women voters particularly Meitei-pangal community should be removed to enable to choose their own candidate.
- There should be proper checked on expenditure of the candidate by the election commission.
- Use of liquor and management of election feast should be checked by law enforcing agencies.
- The political parties should give correct information to the voters in connection with the issue in the programme as part of political awareness. For this purpose a number of discussion and conferences are needed to be arranged and organized at different polling stations.
- The work is based on descriptic and analytical research/method.
- Political actors of the Lilong constituency are giving maximum contribution to the political development in Manipur by participating, leading and joining in the council of Minister in the polity since the election system setup in Manipur.

3. Discussion

From the early period that is 1930s, there are many local leaders and grass root level workers working in different levels in the field of politics in Manipur. Voters of the area also favour regionalism. Many political leaders and educational elites like Md Alimuddin, Md Habibur Rahman, Md Fajlur Rahman and Asraf Ali brought the idea of development works in the Lilong constituency area. Md Habibur Rahman and Quadir Shah fought election and won. Md Fajlur Rahman and Asraf Ali both are teachers by profession brought great changes in the area by way of promoting and opening educational institutions and promoted female education.

The Socio-economic characteristics of the voters influenced the political participation of the people and play important role in deciding the voting behaviours. In the study of voting behaviours, the socio-economic problems of the people have been formed in terms of age, group, sex, income, occupation, and educational status of the voters. There was no caste and religion in voting pattern in the area except clan.

3.1 Educational Status

Generally a literate person means the one who can read and write with understanding in any language. Education in synonymous literally “an educated person” is expected to be more informative about the happening a conscious about politics. The voter with higher educational level may have higher degree of knowledge and understanding about political issues and programme. On the other hand, in politics may not count as there are illiterate who actively participate in politics. As far as voting behavior is concerned, voter with more education are generally expected in the electoral activities.

Literacy and education broaden the political vision and perspective orientation of voting intention. Uneducated voters may not understand the value of vote and democracy. Therefore it is significance to construct the educational structure of the voters. For the present study the voters are classified in four groups viz. illiterate, metric level, under metric level, and graduate level. In early period literacy was at minimum level and denied Meitei- pangal women education. Accordingly, Meitei-pangal women could not came out openly to study in the school and

colleges. Interestingly today the condition of the Meitei-pangal women has changed and literacy rate is increasing day by day.

3.2 Polling Station

There are 21 polling stations in Lilong constituency but now increase to 40 polling stations. Out of 40 polling stations 6 polling stations were mainly dominated by Meitei communities and 1 polling station was dominated by Kabui tribes.

3.3 Political Party Ideology

Political ideology is also a main part of the political system. Some voters depend on ideology of the political party while some others have no firm political ideology. Some of them change their political behavior from one election to another election. From early period upto the present stage political leaders fought election in different political parties. In Lilong constituency political leaders changed their political party regularly. Changing of political party by the candidate also related to the change of voters mind and limitation to political ideology. In this constituency from the sample of voters it is found that a few voters have firm political ideology. The voters affiliated to the Communist Party of India have political ideology. Sometimes they play double role in assembly election if they have no party candidate in the constituency. In the parliament election type of voting pattern is different. Ideology based voters stand proudly in favour of the particular political party and cast their vote on the other side.

3.4 Anti incumbency

Anti incumbency factor also plays an important role in voting behaviours in Lilong constituency. From sample voters of the constituency we found that in 1980 and 1984 assembly elections noted political leaders like Md Alimuddin was defeated in the hands of Md Hellaluddin Khan and he also defeated in the hands of Md Alauddin due to anti incumbency factors. Md Alimuddin being finance minister during united legislature party government of 1977-1979 brought maximum development for the state of Manipur but he could not work and bring maximum number of benefits and development of the constituency. As a result he was defeated in the hands of debutant candidate. Likewise Md Helaluddin khan also defeated in the hands of Md Alauddin though he fought election as a Minister due to incumbency factor.

3.5 Muslim women voters

From early period, Muslim women in Manipur had enjoyed their voting right but most of them could not exercise their right independently in casting vote. The final decision for selecting favourable candidate is made by the head of the family viz husband or son, in the case of wife or old widow women. Even in the house campaign on the eve of election no women can meet the candidate or agent or supporter in the absence of their husband. The team has to visit again to the house in the presence of the husband to converse for election purpose. The same process of political participation of the Muslim women is found among the female voters of Lilong constituency.

3.6 Assembly election 1972

With the enforcement of Government of Union territories Act 1963, Manipur along with Himachal Pradesh and Tripura had been given legislative assembly status. The territorial council constituted under the territorial council Act 1956 has been converted into the territorial legislative assembly in the month of June 1963. The Manipur had granted statehood on 21st January 1972 under the North Eastern Areas (Re-organization) Act. Under this Act Manipur will have 60 Assembly constituencies instead of 30 Assembly Constituencies.

In 1972 assembly election Md Alimuddin was elected from the constituency and defeated his nearest Rival Md Abdul Gani. Then he was selected as a leader of the MPP and also elected as a leader of the united legislature party and form a government under his leadership. Md Alimuddin installed full fledged ministry as the first time in Manipur after statehood on 20-03-1972. In this election Md Alimuddin elected as an MLA by the voters of the area for his able leadership quality and able to join in the council of Ministry by hook or by crook. Md Alimuddin was the first Meitei-pangal and minority Chief Minister of Manipur.

3.7 Assembly Election 1974

After one year government of India imposed President rule in Manipur and dissolved the Assembly Election of 1972. In 1974 Assembly election in Lilong constituency Md Alimuddin (Manipur People Party) was elected from the constituency by defeating his rival Abdul Quadir

Shah (CONGRESS I) by a margin of 1878 votes. After election Alimuddin was elected as a leader of the MPP and form a new government. But the government fall within three months after oath taking. As a result of the instability of the political parties in Manipur President of India imposed President rule. After then, Md Alimuddin was resign from MPP and joined Janata party along with Yangmaso Sheija. After joining in the Janata Party government of India revoked president rule and installed a new government under the leadership of Yangmaso Sheija as a Chief Minister (1977-1979).

3.8 Assembly Election 1980

In the Assembly election Md Alimuddin was defeated by Md Helaluddin khan by a big margin. Alimuddin was defeated as a first time in his life though he was elected 7 times before defeating. Md Helaluddin was elected as a Congress I candidate and became cabinet Minister in the council of Minister under the leadership of R.K. Dorendro Singh. In this election Md Alimuddin was defeated due to increasing Anti incumbency factors and peoples of the constituency wants to teach a lesson. Therefore the peoples of the constituency elected Md Helaluddin Khan not on the basis of qualification, political party or other extra qualities. In this election Md Alimuddin could not move one place to another place due to threatening in his life by underground organizations. After election, some underground organization attack Md Alimuddin's life at his residence at Lilong Turel Ahanbi and killed one personal security guard and one civilian and injured some peoples.

3.9 Assembly Election 1984

Before the assembly election of 1984, Md Alimuddin Ex-Chief Minister was died due to illness. After then Md Alauddin contested as a candidate from the constituency in place of his late father. In the election Md Alauddin was elected by defeating his nearest rival Md Helaluddin khan by margin of 328 votes. In this election 7 candidates fought the election in different parties. After elected as an MLA Md Alauddin sitting in the opposition bench because Congress I got majority and form the Government under the leadership of Shri Rishang Keising. Md Alauddin was elected from the constituency by the voters due to sympathy wave of his late father Md Alimuddin not on the basis of candidate merits.

4. Conclusion

In Lilong constituency ideology and manifesto have little influence on voting behaviors. Most of the political leaders have no ideological based politics. All the political leaders want to join in the council of Minister after elected them as an MLA because it was the fair chance to win again. So voters have doubt to concern of the political leaders. Active political workers, intellectuals and experts have performed such type of service for the success of the candidate. The voters change their political party frequently as they are not bound by political ideology of any political party getting the experiences of the political leaders of the constituency. Most of the voter consider their favorite candidate as the more important as the political ideology and manifesto.

In the area, clans played important role and can decide the luck of a particular candidate before election. So small clans always looking big clans role or directions in the election. Majority of the voters decide their decision in early stage because foundation of the candidate was based on clans and relatives. Every clans wants to produce candidate from their respective clans in order to get political benefit. Muslim female voters could not choose their favourite candidate themselves. There is still a tradition of seeking advice of the elders in the family in deciding their voting choices.

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