

Analytical Study Of Scheduled Tribe MLA's From Reserved Constituencies Of Manipur In India 1967-2022

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ABSTRACT

As per the census of India-2011, the population of Schedule Tribe in Manipur is 40.88% of the entire population which is politically decisive. Twenty out of sixty seats of state legislative assembly and one seat out of two Lok Sabha seats are reserved for ST in Manipur. Political parties in Manipur have to take into consideration this representation of STs for winning elections and sustaining in power thereafter. Recently Meitei, which is a dominant community in Manipur, is aggressively putting its demand for getting ST status. This has created a sort of upheaval in the political world in the form of reaction from the existing STs in the state.

During the period 1967 to 2022 Manipur had thirteen state legislative assembly elections. A total of 744 MLAs were elected and most importantly 241 were the MLAs elected from reserved constituencies for STs. Recently better electoral performance in the reserved constituencies of ST category by Congress party in 2002 and 2012 and by BJP in 2017 has underlined the importance of this category in the electoral politics.

During the period 1967-2022 Congress won 39.18% of seats reserved for ST out of total 222 and because of this only Congress ruled for longer period in Manipur. Whereas Independent candidates were almost 20.72% of the total 241 seats reserved for STs in Manipur which is second largest representation of ST category overall. Most of these were rebelled leaders of congress elected as independents. If we club them, the winning percentage of Congress ST MLAs and independent ST MLAs together is around 60% of the total reserved seats for ST category. The rest of all parties could win only 40% seats reserved for this category in Manipur. These parties in a way have failed in keeping pace with ST category as Congress did and remained in power race in Manipur for a longer period. BJP won 2017 and 2022 assembly elections in Manipur and the percentage of ST category MLAs in the same underlines the integral role of these reserved constituencies in the state politics.

This article focuses on the electoral performance of different political parties in ST reserved constituencies in Manipur during the period 1967-2022. The dynamics of ST representation, its analysis and changing trends have been the key issues of discussion in this paper.

Hypothesis:

1. Reserved seats for STs in Manipur once were a bastion for INC but in the recent years it has turn weaker.
2. BJP has emerged occupying space of INC in the reserved seats for STs in Manipur
3. Performance and status of independent MLAs in ST reserved constituencies is better than regional political parties and the ruling BJP.
4. In the reserved constituencies for STs in Manipur, the regional parties have often shown good results in close fights.

5. In reserved constituencies, quite often, the fight for existence is quadrangular.

Key-Words:

Manipur, Legislative Assembly, Elections, Political Parties, Schedule Tribe, Political Recruitment, Political Representation and Political Share.

Need of Study:

To know and understand the representations of various political parties through ST reserved

constituencies in Manipur state assembly by various political parties, this study is important.

Importance of Study:

To understand how the various political parties in Manipur represent and recruit STs in the Manipur state assembly, this study is important.

Objectives:

1. To investigate the representation of STs in Manipur state legislative assembly by political parties.
2. To check the political support-base of various parties in Manipur in the ST reserved constituencies.

Research Question:

1. What is the percentage of representation party-wise in ST reserved constituencies in Manipur?
2. Whether truly STs are represented well by the national political parties in the state of Manipur?
3. What is the reason behind regional/Local parties gaining continuous support in ST reserved constituencies of Manipur?

Scope and Limitations:

This study is limited to 241 reserved constituencies for ST and its representation by MLAs of different parties during the period 1967 to 2022 (13 assembly elections) only.

Research Methodology:

Analytical method has been used while writing this research paper. Various reports of the election commission of India, Census reports, research papers, books and newspapers have been referred to obtain statistical data of the state elections of Manipur. Data as and when necessary has been used in the form of graphs so as to support the statements in this paper.

Introduction:

Population of Schedule Tribe (ST) in Manipur state is more than 40% of the state population. 19 out of 60 state legislative assembly seats and 01 out of 02 seats of Lok Sabha are reserved for ST category. Taking into consideration this percentage of ST category in Manipur, we should understand the role of this community in Manipur state assembly elections. Based on the data available of political recruitment, political share and representation of ST category in

Manipur assembly elections for the period 1967-2022 could be studied as follows.

I. Indian National Congress (INC):

Congress has been a major political party in Manipur since the making of the state of Manipur. Out of the 23 chief-ministers the state assembly has had, 13 were from INC, 02 were from BJP and the remaining 08 were of regional parties. Major independent candidates in Manipur who have won the elections or have lead the coalition government time and again were the rebels from INC one should not forget while studying Manipur state and its political history. INC in Manipur throughout remained in the front because of its policies and agenda of working for the schedule tribe population in the state and because of this policy only INC could remain as a major party for such long period in the state. Out of 222 assembly seats reserved for ST in Manipur, INC could win 87 (39.18%). From 2017 the picture changed in Manipur. In the 2017 assembly election INC could win only 09 against its 14 in 2012. In 2022 out of the total 19 seats reserved for ST INC could not win a single seat also. The vacuum created with this loss of INC in 2017 and 2022 elections in Manipur BJP emerged and occupied this space and could lead the state subsequently. On the basis of this analysis and data, first hypothesis statement, **“Reserved seats for STs in Manipur once were a bastion for INC but in the recent years it has turn weaker”** is found correct. In future, INC will have to work through its policies in the reserved constituencies in Manipur state assembly to regain power.

2. Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP):

BJP had no fortune and considerable representation in Manipur state legislative assembly till 2017 elections. In the assembly elections of 2002, 2017 and 2022 BJP won 02, 05 and 06 seats (13 seats-5.39%) so far in ST reserved constituencies. Putting aside the longest rule of INC, BJP established its government first in 2017 and then in 2022. BJP's electoral performance in ST reserved constituencies in the recent times in Manipur through data supports the hypothesis statement number two, **“BJP has emerged occupying space of INC in the reserved seats for STs in Manipur”**. But BJP will have the challenge of keeping this performance on in reserved constituencies in Manipur.

3. Independent MLAs:

Independent candidates have represented amply in Manipur legislative assembly in almost all thirteen elections. A total of 241 seats out of ST reserved seats so far represented in assembly. After INC, Independent MLA's are in second position when it comes to representation through seats in assembly. 48 independent ST MLAs with a percentage of 19.91% we see through data available. Many of these MLAs were either rebel or they were the members of INC before they joined some other part or elected as independent candidate. It makes very clear that the situation of other regional parties and that of BJP is very weak as compared to INC and the independent candidates in Manipur state assembly. Hypothesis framed earlier, **"Performance and status of independent MLAs in ST reserved constituencies is better than regional political parties and the ruling BJP"** stands true based on the analysis of data.

4. Local/Regional Parties of Manipur:

Out of the 241 ST reserved constituencies in Manipur INC and BJP have won 87 and 13 seats so far (100 seats together-41.49%). Remaining 141 (58.60%) seats out of 241 have been won by local/regional and independent parties. The most important thing is, these parties and candidates have achieved this success without any strong support or resources at hand. The established parties like INC and BJP had to face a very strong protest through electoral process by these regional/local parties and their candidates. In many cases, the political giants of national parties had to face defeat in election from the local ordinary contestants. Hypothesis number four above, **"In the reserved constituencies for STs in Manipur, the regional parties have often shown good results in close fights"** stands cent-percent true.

5. Regional Parties from out of Manipur State:

In ST reserved constituencies of Manipur state, we see quite often a very tough fight in quadrangle. For that we need to divide the political parties available in Manipur in four groups. They are, 1. National parties, 2. Regional parties from other states, 3. Local/Regional political parties, 4. Independent candidates. Out of total 241 ST reserved seats

in Manipur state assembly so far, INC and BJP together have had 100 seats overall (41.49%). Regional parties from other states (09 Parties) have won 39 seats (16.18%). Local/Regional political parties from Manipur have won 55 seats (22.82%) and the independents have won 48 seats (19.91%). Thus, the four fold competition and fight we see in Manipur state assembly elections.

Though, throughout we see, INC as a major game-player in Manipur but the party could not win a single seat also out of 19 reserved seats for ST is a fact. Its counterpart, who is in rule both at the centre and in the state, BJP also had to stop at 06 seats only out of 19 reserved for STs in Manipur. Though, these national parties have ruled Manipur again and again but the analysis investigates the vacuum that exists in the recent victories of these two national parties is a fact.

On the other hand, all the nine regional parties from other states together have won 39 seats (16.18%) is really interesting and appealing through electoral results in Manipur. In a way, the local/regional parties and the regional parties from other states have created a challenge before national parties in Manipur. These local parties cater the needs of people and try to put it before the government through their representation in house attracting the social and ethnic groups towards them and ultimately, win the election. National political parties perhaps because of their larger national vision fail to understand regional aspirations and the diversity in this region and that leads to their fall before regional parties is an important observation. This reinstates the earlier hypothesis stating, **"In reserved constituencies, quite often, the fight for existence is quadrangular"** true at this juncture in the state of Manipur.

Findings and Conclusion:

On the basis of the data and its analysis, following inferences can be drawn-

1. ST voters in Manipur never show their inclination towards any of the political parties maintaining safe distance (Refer table no. 2 for statistical data).
2. We see quadrangle competition in ST reserved constituencies among the political parties in Manipur assembly elections.

3. Regional/Local parties are close to the voter as compared to the national political parties hence, their choice we see naturally in the electoral results.
4. In ST reserved constituencies, no political party can have its claim for longer time.

In short, all these national as well as local/regional parties will have to work hard so as to have their support base in these ST reserved constituencies in Manipur. The future of these parties in Manipur will largely be equivalent to their work for these social, cultural and ethnic groups at various level is a fact.

Table No.1 : Category-wise population of Manipur

SC	ST	OBC/Open	Literacy	Major Languages
3.41%	44.88%	52.02%	66.83%	Manipuri, Mao, Thado, Tangkhul, Kabui, Nepali

(Source : Census Report of India, 2011)

Table No.2 : Religious Demography of Manipur

Religion	Hindu	Christian	Muslims	Buddha	Jain	Sikh	Other	Non-religious	Non-Hindu
%	41.39	41.29	8.40	0.25	0.06	0.05	8.19	0.38	58.61

(Source : Census Report of India, 2011)

Figure 1 Performance of Political Parties in ST Reserved seats of Manipur Assembly 1967-2022

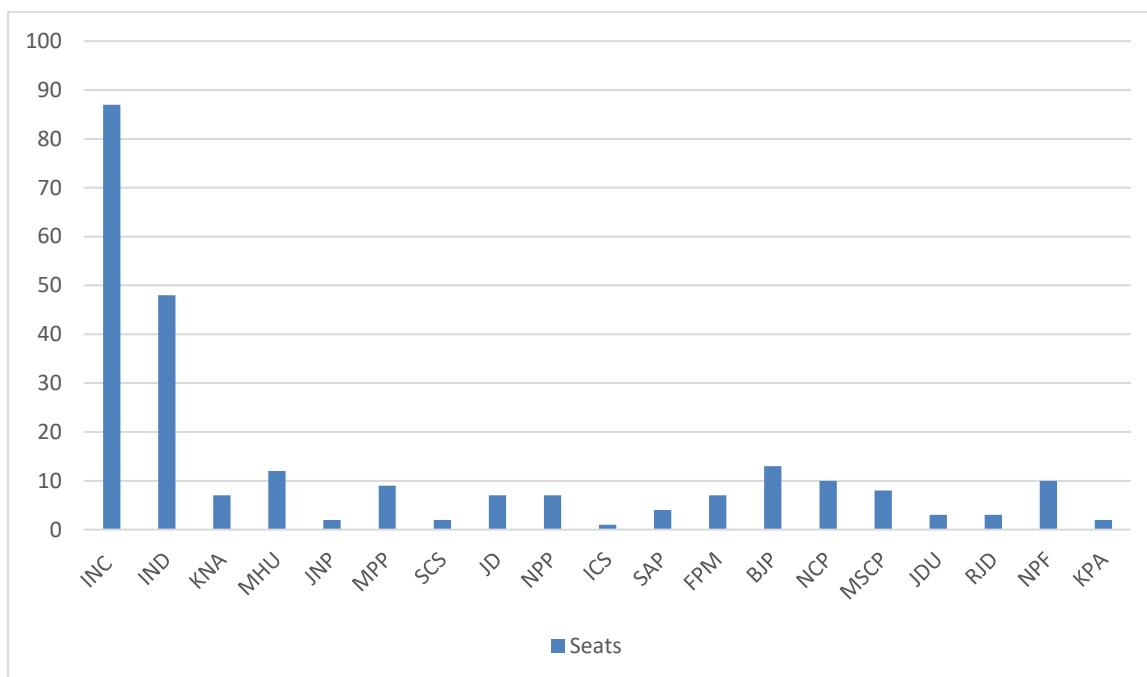


Table No.3 : Performance of Political Parties in ST Reserved seats of Manipur Assembly 1967-1922

Year	1967	1972	1974	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022	GT	%
Voting %	69.10	75.89	84.60	82.42	87.29	89.95	91.41	90.38	89.87	86.73	79.19	86.63	77.31	83.90	

Total Seat		30	60	60	60	60	54	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	744	100
N	Part y	%														
1	INC	5	7	5	6	9	8	5	4	10	5	14	9	-	87	19.50
2	IND	5	13	1	8	9	-	1	-	-	9	-	-	2	48	19.91
3	KNA	-	-	2	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2.90
4	MH U	-	-	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	4.97
5	JNP	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.82
6	MPP	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	3.73
7	SCS	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.82
8	JD	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2.90
9	NPP	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	7	2.90
10	ICS	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.41
11	SAP	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	4	1.65
12	FPM	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-	7	2.90
13	BJP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	6	13	5.39
14	NCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1	1	4	-	-	10	4.14
15	MSC P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	-	1	-	-	8	3.31
16	JDU	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	3	1.24
17	RJD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	3	1.24
18	NPF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	6	10	4.14
19	KPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	0.82
20	TO	10	20	20	18	20	19	19	19	19	19	19	20	19	241	100
21	%	33	33	33	30	33	31	31	31	31	31	31	33	31.6	100	
		.3	.3	.3	.0	.3	.6	.6	.6	.6	.6	.6	66	.3	6	
		3	3	3	0	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	3			

Source : Different Reports of Election Commission of India)

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