

## **The Role of Muslims in the Statehood Movement in Manipur**

**Dr. Md Abdul Salaam**

*Assistant Professor Department of Political Science Thoubal Collage, Thoubal*

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**ABSTRACT:** The statehood movement was one of the important historical events of the post - merger period of Manipur. It was a mass movement in which all the leading political social and voluntary organisation in the state, were actively involved and participated in one way or other. The causes for the outbreak of the movement were directly connected with the administrative change in the state which was developed just after the merger of Manipur into India in the year 1949. It was a long continued movement based on the democratic and non-violent principal. The demand and aspiration of the people was finally fulfilled after the movement passed through different phase of the political struggle.

**KEY WORDS:** Assembly, Constitution, Commissioner, council, Democracy, Government, Muslim, Statehood.

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### **I. DISCUSSION**

#### **1.1. WHY PEOPLE DEMANDED STATEHOOD?**

After the merger of Manipur into Indian Union in 1949, there was no uniformity in the political status among the states in India. The constitution divided the state into three categories i.e. Part - A, and Part - B , and Part - C. Manipur was in the categories of Part - C State along with Ajmer, Bhopal Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Vindya Pradesh, Belaspur, Tripura and Kutch. Again among the Part - C States also there were two types of categories. Except Manipur all the other had been the privilege of having a Legislative Assembly. Whereas, in case of the three state, the Indian government decided to give the political status of the level and advisory council.<sup>1</sup> The Government of India after prolonged discussion had nominated Advisory Council vide order No. dated New Delhi 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1950. The member of the Manipur Advisory Council were Md. Alimuddin, Samarendra Singh, Dwijamani Sharma, Jogeshor Singh, Indramani, A. Gourabidhu Singh, Krishnamohon Singh, N. Ibomcha Singh, S.L.Lunch, Teba Killong, A Daiho, R Suisa, Sotel Kuki, M. Chandra Singh etc.<sup>2</sup>

The Advisory Council was also powerless. In case of difference of opinion between the Chief Commissioner and his advisors the matter was referred to the President of India. The discussion of the President was final. That means the advice given by the advisor in the Part-C State might be rejected by the Chief Commissioner. He was not bound by their advice. He acted as an agent of central government. In other words, all the administrative work of Manipur was vested only in the Chief Commissioner. The establishment of the Advisory Council was not the desire of the people of Manipur. The feeling of the people was represented by the political parties. Taking his confidence of the people in their hand, different political parties of Manipur began to demand for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur immediately.

#### **1.2. ESTABLISHMENT OF UNION TERRITORIAL COUNCIL**

On 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1952, a meeting of MPs from the Part- C States was held in Delhi. In that meeting, L. Jugeshwar Singh said that there was no democracy in Manipur. There was the rule of one man ( Chief Commissioner) and the entire population of Manipur was dissatisfied with it.<sup>3</sup> A meeting of Manipur Mahila Sanmilan was held on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 1952 and passed a resolution for passing the Indian Government give Manipur a legislative Assembly. The women folk included Muslim women of Manipur also resolved to help in demanding the status of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>4</sup> In a public meeting gathering about 50,000 (fifty thousand) people including different communities of Manipur, Jawaharlal Nehru the then Prime Minister announced 3:20 p.m. of October 23<sup>th</sup> 1952 that Manipur and Tripura will be given the status of democratic form of government. Further he announced that democratic form of government was not only to appoint 5 (five) ministers but also it should be whole heartedly tried by all sections of Manipuri. On the same day, in another meeting of the congress party held in the Rupmahal Theatre he announced that democratic form of government shall surely be given to Manipur.<sup>5</sup> On 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1953, a public meeting was held at the Polo Ground, Imphal for demanding a Legislative Assembly. In that meeting two local parties viz, the National Union and Gandhi Seval Sabha together form the Revolutionary Party. This party took the extreme step for demanding a Legislative Assembly

within 15 days. If the demand was not granted, the party said that Manipur would be declared as an independent state.<sup>6</sup> Nine MPs of several parties submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1953, demanding the Legislative Assembly of Manipur and Tripura according to Part - C State Act.<sup>7</sup> The demand was supported by the Electoral College. Md. Alimuddin and Md. Tomba were members of the Electoral College of that time.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India came to Imphal on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1954. From 11:45 a.m to 1: 00 p.m of that day Dr. Rajendra Prasad met the members of the political parties, advisors and leaders of different communities in the Chief Commissioner's Bungalow of Manipur. The Congress party submitted memorandum to the president requesting to give a democratic form of government. The Praja Socialist party also submitted a memorandum requesting to give democratic form of government.<sup>9</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1954, Praja Socialist Party shout slogan demanding the democratic form of government at the gate of Advisory Council and 35 person including Muslim were injured.<sup>10</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1954 the C.P.I Manipur State Council also organised a public meeting attended by 5,000 (Five thousand) including Muslim people of Manipur. The meeting criticized the use of outside police force for suppression of the peaceful agitation.<sup>11</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1954 a general meeting was held at Lamphel. All the section of people including Muslim participated in the meeting. The meeting was convened by the "United Democratic Front Organizing Committee". The meeting resolved the democratic form of government should be established and for this signatures were to be collected from the people and sent to the central government. The front later change its name into "The United Assembly Demand Committee" at the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1954.<sup>12</sup> There was a lot of pressure on them from all direction, the government of India decided to give the political status of the level of the Territorial Council. Thus Manipur became a Union Territory form the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1956.<sup>13</sup>

### **1.3. ESTABLISHMENT OF TERRITORIAL ASSEMBLY**

The establishment of Territorial Council, which had enjoyed no political power of their own, was not the desire of the people of the Manipur. This type of new administrative arrangement did not make any provision or having a close relationship between the common people and administrators. It is quite clear that under this arrangement the real administrative power of the territory was still in the hand of bureaucrats. The member of the council did not have any power to express their own opinions on the vital political issue of the country. Indeed their political position or status under this new system was not more than a peon in their own area.<sup>14</sup> They should take any type of decision for the betterment of the state. Their duty was simply to follow the directive of the central government in every aspect of the administration of the state.

In order to get the target, several agitations from different political parties, voluntary organisation, students union, organisation of different communities from hill and valley proceeded. On 20<sup>th</sup> July 1958, the Praja Socialist Party passed a resolution to the effect that the member of the Territorial Council should resign in public interest.<sup>15</sup> In 1959, the Manipur State Socialist Party in its 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference felt that development of Manipur was delayed with the existence of Manipur Territorial Council Act and therefore resolved to enforce for forming a responsible government in Manipur.<sup>16</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> March 1960, "Civil Resistance Day" was observed more than fifty thousand people including Muslim gathered at the Polo Ground and paraded in Imphal town.<sup>17</sup> On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1960, a committee under the name and style of 'Assembly Demand Co-ordination Committee' was formed and they submitted memorandum to the President of India requesting to replace a responsible government of Manipur in place of the administration of the Chief Commissioner on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1960.<sup>18</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1960, 'Assembly Demanded Co-ordination Committee' had submitted a memorandum to the President of Republic India and they unreal him to bring administrative system of the Chief Commissioner to an end and requested him to establish a responsible government of Manipur.

On 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1960, Manipur band was launched pressing the demand of a responsible government. No. vehicles were seen on the road and government officers were paralysed and Civil Disobedient movement was launched for a week. Slogan were continued demanding the Legislative Assembly in Manipur in front of the officers of the Chief Commissioner, Secretariat, District Court and D.C. office.<sup>19</sup> In April 1960, 'The Manipur Youth Assembly Demand Committee' had submitted a memorandum to the president of India for giving Legislative Assembly status in Manipur. They also mention that the Chief Commissioner's administration was precisely undemocratic principal. They also criticize the administrative function of the our bureaucrat in the government and they further said that the non- Manipuri officers exploited the people of Manipur with this observation they strongly demanded that direct rule of the central government in Manipur should be abolished without any further delay.<sup>20</sup>

On 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1960 a mass rally was organised under the sponsorship of the 'Assembly Demand Co-ordination Committee' in order to get the responsible government. In this rally a large number of Muslims were participated with other communities.<sup>21</sup> On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1960, Women's Assembly Committee observed "Women's Assembly Demand Day" on the very day, more than fifty thousand womenfolk including Muslim women arranged a big rally at Imphal Polo Ground and submitted a memorandum to the Chief Commissioner of

Manipur stating that Manipur due to the status of the Union Territory the right of the people of Manipur was forfeited. They further demanded a full fledged Legislative Assembly in order to get their social right, economic right, political right and also urged the Chief Commissioner to communicate their demands to the central government immediately and also informed that they had arranged for a big rally for both men and women in the near future. On 11<sup>th</sup> July, 1960 the Praja Socialist Party organised a celebration on "Manipur Kanba Numit" (Save Manipur Day) at Polo Ground, Imphal and on that day the people unanimously resolved to revive the responsible government which was in existence before the pre-merger in Manipur.<sup>22</sup>

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1960, the Manipur Territorial Council passed a resolution. In that resolution the council requested the central government (i) to introduce a strong administration to safeguard the territorial unity and integrity of Manipur. (ii) to amend the constitution of India so that statehood may be given to Manipur (iii) to establish a Legislative Assembly before the third parliamentary election (iv) to give for the time being, more power to the territorial council as a sure step towards the establishment of Legislative Assembly in Manipur.<sup>23</sup> In this council Md. Alimuddin and Md Amzad Ali were members among the Muslim community. In the meeting organised by the Congress party on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1960, it was resolved that Manipur should be given a full fledged statehood in case Naga Hills and Tuensang Area were given full fledged statehood.<sup>24</sup> A delegation of all committees of Manipur arrived Delhi in order to press the demand of responsible government on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1960. In that some MPs tried to keep Manipur and Tripura under Assam state but the proposal was forcibly opposed by the delegation team.<sup>25</sup>

When the then Home Minister of India, Shri Lal Bhadur Sastri came to Manipur on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1961, the congress party submitted a memorandum demanding a responsible government in Manipur. In response to the memorandum, Lal Bhadur Sastri informed the congress party that there would be some change in the administration. The Manipuris would participate in the administration of Manipur and some would be passed in the next parliamentary session.<sup>26</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1961 the Home Minister said the following in the Lok Sabha. Our basic approach is to afford an opportunity to the representative of the people to develop their territory and also given them a feeling of genuine participation in the running of the administration. In order to give effect to this approach, it seems essential that all works relating to development shall be transferred to the territorial council, it will include subject like education beyond the secondary stage, all medical institution, agriculture, animal husbandry co-operatives, panchayats, industry and supply, labour and employment road and building, irrigations and electricity.<sup>27</sup>

There was a lot of pressure on them from all directions. Having no other alternatives, Indian government decided to give political status of level of a territorial Legislative Assembly. Thus Manipur became a Territorial Legislative Assembly from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1963.<sup>28</sup>

#### **1.4. DEMAND FOR FULL FLEDGED STATEHOOD**

The establishment of Territorial Assembly was not a satisfactory solution for the demand of the people of Manipur. All the leaders of various political parties and social workers did not take it as right answer to their demand. The basic arrangement of the general public was that Manipur was an independent state before the merger into India. Therefore the political status of Manipur should not be degraded to the level of a Union Territory. Therefore they began to put a strong pressure on the central government for the establishment of a responsible government. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1966, the Manipur territorial Assembly passed a resolution for the establishment of responsible government in the state. In this territorial Assembly, Md. Alimuddin, Md. Chaoba and Md. Ashraf Ali were the members among the Muslim community.<sup>29</sup>

On 29<sup>th</sup> February 1968, at the initiative of some political parties, a joint committee was formed under the banner of "All Manipur Statehood Demand Committee". They organised a political conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March at the Aryan Theatre Hall where they strongly urged the leaders of the central government to grant statehood as soon as possible.<sup>30</sup> In the second week of May 1968, All Manipur Statehood Demand Committee organised a memorandum to the Prime Minister and Home Minister for demanding statehood in Manipur.<sup>31</sup> On 8<sup>th</sup> June 1968, All Manipur Statehood Demand Committee organised a public meeting at Mapal Kangjeibung and resolved that central government should give statehood to Manipur.<sup>32</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1968, Manipur Territorial Congress organised a political conference at Bir Tikendrajit Park and resolved that if the central government neglect the demand of statehood, there would be a great problem in integrated, law and order throughout the country.<sup>33</sup>

On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1968 a joint meeting of a secretaries of all colleges was held at D.M. College and resolved to press for a full fledged statehood in Manipur.<sup>34</sup> On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1968, All Manipur Students Union and Youth Congress Committee of Manipur gave memorandum to Home Minister for granting statehood and home in his reply, stated that he could not say about the statehood in the off hand.<sup>35</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1968, the Manipuris were enraged when Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India said that there would be no change in the administrative set up of Manipur. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1968 All Manipur Students Union protested to the statement given by the Prime Minister.<sup>36</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1969, five political parties viz, MPP,

PSP, SSP, CPI and CPI(M) organised a meeting at Imphal and agreed to hold band, dharna, civil disobedient, demonstration, picketing for the sake of statehood.<sup>37</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1969 at 1:00 p.m Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India arrived at Tulihal Airport and public shouted by holding black flag that Manipur would be disintegrated if statehood was not given. On the same day, Manipur Territorial Congress submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister and informed that the most important demand of Manipur was statehood.<sup>38</sup> On 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1969, Md Alimuddin leader of United Legislature front declared that they would launched the agitation for statehood.<sup>39</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> October 1969, Imphal SSP in special council declared that they would support Manipur statehood agitation.<sup>40</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1970, the Congress decided to boycott any mid-term or general election. A memorandum submitted to the Minister of Home Affairs that to announce the granting of statehood to Manipur on or before 15 February, 1970.<sup>41</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1970 SSP, PSP, CPI (M) Congress (R), MPP and CPI held a meeting and they discussed various lines of action for statehood.<sup>42</sup> The worker of congress party launched Dharna from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March 1970 at various sub-divisional headquarters and office of the district commissioner Imphal. In continuation of their action they launched a programme of mass hunger strike on the 19<sup>th</sup> March at Bir Tikendrajit Park and Md Abdul Wahid, along with one thousand volunteers participated. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1970 many MPs pressed for giving statehood to Manipur.<sup>43</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1970, the volunteers of the left for Delhi for pressing for granting statehood and they preceded Dharna and hunger Strike there. In this delegation Md Habibur Rahman along with 90 workers participated.<sup>44</sup>

On the same day a batch of socialist volunteers also left Imphal for Delhi under the slogan of "Delhi Chalo". All parties statehood demand co-ordinating Body was formed on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1970 by the six party Samyukta socialist party, Praja Socialist Party, Manipur People's Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Congress (R) for the establishment of a full responsible government of Manipur.<sup>45</sup> Twelve MPs of Lok Sabha proposed for statehood of Manipur. One of them Shri Silbha Yoji pointed out Nagaland which has less population than Manipur got statehood and Manipur which has more population than Nagaland has not been given statehood.<sup>46</sup> A public meeting was held at 2:00 p.m of 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1970 at Tera Keithel under the sponsorship of Manipur People Party, Md Alimuddin, the then leader of MPP assured that MPP will certainly supported and participated all the works related to the achievement of statehood in Manipur in consultation with all parties Statehood Demand Co-ordinating Body.<sup>47</sup>

The "All Parties Statehood Demand Co-ordinating Body" made the following request to the team of 10 MPs who were coming to study the political situation in Manipur on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1970. They started "we approach to the parliament of India ably shaping the future of the country through you with these few words which we hope you will take to the national supreme body with the legitimate demand of the people of this region will be fulfilled without further delay".<sup>48</sup> A Manipur band was observed organised by the All parties Statehood Demand Co-ordinating Body on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1970. The band was strongly supported by all communities from all over Manipur.<sup>49</sup>

In the meeting of Manipur Pradesh Congress committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1970, it was resolved that Manipur should be given statehood within the years 1970.<sup>50</sup> On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1970 two representative of congress party left for Delhi to collect signatures of MPs. The MPs were also at stake to collect signatures they tried to collect 200 signatures out of 237 Rajya Sabha MPs and 400 signatures out of 510 Lok Sabha MPs for achievement of statehood.<sup>51</sup> All parties statehood Demand Co-ordinating body observed a 'Manipur Band' on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1970. And for the first time in Manipur on the day, there was not even a cycle on the road.<sup>52</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1970, volunteers of the All parties statehood Demand Co-ordinating Body observed Sytagraha near secretariat gates with slogan like we demand statehood, Co-ordination Body Zindabad were shouted. All of them were arrested and put into jail. The then leaders of the Muslim Md Alimuddin, Md Ashraf Ali, Md Chaoba, Md Zalaluddin, Md Abdul Wahid along with large numbers of Muslims namely Md. Feijuddin, Md Alauddin, Md Najir Ahammed, Md Basiruddin, Md Siraj Ahameed, Md Aouden, Md Amuba, Md Maniruddin etc. were arrested by the police. As the central jail at Imphal did not have sufficient accommodation for confining the agitator a temporary sub jail was established at Pallel.<sup>53</sup> The law and order situated completely collapsed. The administrative machinery was totally paralysed. The people refused to give any co-operation to the administration. Thus a serious situation was developing in the state. The matter became of very serious concern to the ruling party in the centre.

## II. CONCLUSION

In short, there was a lot of pressure on them from all direction, having no- alternatives, India government decided to give political status of the level of a full fledged state from 21<sup>st</sup> January 1970. On 21<sup>st</sup> January 1972, Shri V.V Giri, President of India issued notification that Manipur and Tripura shall be full fledge statehood with immediate effect on the same day. Mrs Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India inaugurated Manipur a full fledge state at 10:30 a.m.<sup>54</sup> In this movement, all the communities of Manipur, the Nagas, the Kukies, the Meiteis and the Muslims agitated together and got their demands. In spite of micro

population of Muslim, Md Alimuddin on his followers took notable role in the statehood movement of Manipur. So he got the first Chief Minister ship of Manipur state in 1972. It is indeed the effort of him to shape a new Manipur.

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