Crossref

# MUSLIM MINORITIES IN ELECTORAL POLITICS OF TRIPURA

**Sumon Ali[1]✉, Alak Bhattacharya[2]**

**Abstract:**

Indian democracy allows citizens to choose their ruler by using their democratic rights of Universal Adult Franchise. However, they all cannot freely choose their representative due to many obligations from their leaders, community, and groups to which they belong. The study of electoral politics helps us to understand determinants of the voting behaviour of individual or community. The participation of religious minorities in electoral politics increases significantly, elections after elections, and their share in governance has increased only marginally. Among the Minorities, Muslims are the vulnerable section of Society and under-represented in India's legislative bodies and political process and the state of Tripura. Tracing the position of Muslim minorities in the electoral politics of Tripura, the findings observe that Muslims are politically less aware due to many socio-economic problems and the terrible intention of some political parties for using Muslims as vote bank without concerning the development of the communities. In this background, the present study is an attempt to understand the role of Muslim Minorities in the electoral politics of Tripura. It also examines the issues and factors that influence the Muslims' political behaviour during elections in Tripura.

## 1.0 Introduction:

Indian democracy implies that the government draws its authority from the will of the people. The will of the people reflected in many ways like voting in the election, political participation, sharing the political opinion of the Individual and the masses. The study of electoral politics helps to understand how the individual electorate can impact public policy (Nath, 2009). It attempts to discover the extent and nature of uniformities in people's actual behaviour and groups of people in the political process (Nath, 2009). Through the participation of religious minorities in electoral politics is increasing elections after elections, their share in governance has increased only marginally (Ansari, 2006). Muslim Minorities are the vulnerable section of the Society and under-represented in the parliament, state legislature and local bodies (Bhattacharya & Ali, 2018; Rahaman, 2018). They are also having less representation in political organisations and political activities. However, the community's political mobilisation and electoral participation have always remained satisfactory even though it has remained the most disempowered religious

---

1 [Author] ✉ [Corresponding Author] Research Scholar cum Guest Faculty, Department of Political Science,Tripura University, Suryamaninagar, 799022, Agartala, Tripura, INDIA. E-mail: sumonkls786@gmail.com

2 [Author] Professor & HOD, Department of Political Science, Tripura University, Suryamaninagar,799022, Agartala, Tripura, INDIA
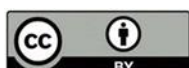
community in contemporary India (Sacher Report, 2006; Nath, 2009). This type of situation of Muslims is also similar in the case of Tripura. On the eve of the election, Muslims are often referred to as a 'pampered community', and the government's promises, though seldom fulfilled, are criticised as 'minorityism' (Mainuddin, 2011). In contemporary India, most of the leaders and parties have tended to use Muslims as a vote bank and by no means made any serious effort to help the community on socio-economic issues (Kumar, 2014). An analysis of Minority politics reveals that many religious leaders from the national to the state and district level are guilty of this practice.

Several factors contribute towards the formulation of the Political or voting behaviour of electorates with varying intensities. An analysis of voting behaviour shows that voting behaviour may range from several social identities- including castes, religion, race, ethnicity, occupation, gender, and language. Again political campaigns, political affiliations with some association, peer groups, support for specific ideology and policy or agenda also influence voting behaviour. However, these cannot be claimed as the only forces because any historical events, political culture, mobilisation, values or direct socialisation through public courses or movement can also help to shape specific voting behaviour. With the development in science and technology, many factors such as media boosted with ease of access, more extensive distribution, and sophisticated communication techniques. In searching for the answer to the above, the present study seeks to examine the role of Muslim Minorities in the electoral politics of Tripura. The study examines the issues and factors that influence Muslims' political behaviour and the controversy of Muslim vote bank in the state. It also focuses on the salient trends towards voting behaviour during elections in Tripura.

### 1.1 *Review of Literature:*

The present study will help to predict the pattern of the political behaviour of Muslim minorities in Tripura. A good deal of literature has been reviewed concerning the nature of Electoral politics, the role of Muslim peoples in politics and their political behaviour. Regarding the above issues, many works are conducted on different aspects in the countries and different states of India, but these kinds of work are rare in Tripura. The political behaviour of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura is an unexplored area. The issues on the research topic, "Muslim Minorities in Electoral politics in Tripura", have been related books and articles that are very useful for understanding the Research Problems. Such books and Journal's articles can be mention to gain knowledge for conducting research.

Roy (2000), in her book "*Electoral Politics in India: Election Process and Outcomes, Voting Behaviour and Current Trends*", made a sincere attempt to the author for an in-depth study of all aspects of the elections-electoral behaviour, caste politics, regional influences, defections which usually are the very basis of the battle of the ballot.

Kumar (1996), in his Article "*Muslims in Electoral Politics*", describe, Muslims have generally been regarded as a vote bank for Congress and have tended to vote en-bloc. His study argues that the Muslim community is no longer an electoral monolith. There are differences in the voting behaviour of its members in terms of socio-economic status, educational attainments, occupational structure and mobility patterns.

Ahmed (2014), in his article "*What is Muslim vote bank*?" defined the 'Muslim vote bank' as an established political template by which the voting behaviour of Muslim communities in India is understood and analysed. He assumed that Muslims is divided in social status and has diversity. This internal diversity determines the nature of the political engagements of Muslims at various

levels. He finds the Muslim vote bank turns out to be a logical outcome of the three Formulations- constitutional identity, development issues and expectation. He also assumes that the notion of the Muslim vote bank, it seems, will continue to survive until and unless Muslim plurality is not recognised as a political reality.

Hasan (2009), in her book *"Politics of Inclusion: Caste, Minorities, and Affirmative Action"*, examines the politics of inclusion through an analysis of the policies, politics, and debates concerning the strategies of the state about lower castes and minorities. She blames the state policy for the identity and security-centric Muslim politics in total disregard of the axes of equity and justice. In contrast, as she underlines, the concerns for lower castes are located in the context of justice, equality and democracy.

Engineer (1995), in his article "Politics of Muslim Vote Bank", tries to describe the politics of vote bank in India by conducting surveys during the Maharastra election. Engineer argues that various political parties and organisations hold public meetings in Muslim-dominated areas and raking up different issues to influence the voters. He explains, vote banks are more a creation of political parties rather than religious or communal behaviour.

Chakraborty (2009), in her article *"Muslim Inhabitants of Tripura: A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile"*, tries to uphold the demographic and socio-cultural situation of the Muslims of Tripura, with particular reference to the historical, descriptive and statistical account of diverse sociological aspects of a Muslim's life and Society.

Thus, all the studies mentioned above discuss one or another aspect of the research problem. Moreover, no studies have made so far on the Political Behaviour of the Muslim Minorities in Tripura. Though vast literature exists in Muslim in the Electoral politics in the Indian context and its different areas of study, a considerable gap has yet been found in their work. The present study will make a humble attempt to cover some aspects of the pattern of the political behaviour of the Muslim people in the Electoral process and their role in the electoral politics of Tripura.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are as follows:
- To examine the role of Muslim Minorities in the electoral politics of Tripura.
- To find out the factors that had influenced the political behaviour of the Muslim Community.

### 1.3 Research Questions:

- What are the factors that influence the political behaviour of Muslim minorities?
- What are the things and strategies that should implement to improve political awareness of Muslims?

### 1.4 Methodology:

The nature of the present empirical study is descriptive as well as explorative. The study is primarily quantitative and based on the field survey method. The interview and questionnaire method is followed in order to do a comprehensive survey. The primary and secondary sources are used for data analysis. Primary data is collected through a field survey conducted in the 2 (two) Legislative Assembly Constituency. Data is collected through Self-developed structured questionnaire tools with the help of the interview schedule. On the other hand, secondary data is collected through library survey, Books, Journals, Census Reports, Government and non- governmental sources, and the Election commission's Electoral Roll and Election results.

*1.5 The Study Area:*

Tripura is divided into 60 Assembly Constituencies (A.C.s) by the Election Commission of India. Among the total Assembly Constituencies, the average percentage (%) of Muslim voters is 7.19 per cent (as per the 2013 electoral roll). However, the constituencies of Boxanagar and Sonamura has most of the Muslim voters. Boxanagar has 55.62% of Muslim Voter, and Sonamura has 39.31% of Muslim Voters, which belong to many Muslim voters among all constituencies of Tripura. The Constituencies are divided into various polling booths, and our survey is conducted in 2 booths from each constituency, which has 100% Muslim voters. The sample size of this study is 200 respondents of the rural area has been taken. This sample size has been taken to represent the whole geographical area of the Sonamura subdivision with Sonamura and Boxanagar Assembly Constituency under Sepahijala District of Tripura from April 2018 to June 2018. Purposive and random sampling method was used while selecting the study area and respondents.

**2.0 Muslim Minorities in Electoral Politics of Tripura:**

In Tripura, Muslims are the largest religious minority group comprising 8.60% of the state's total population (Census 2011). The Muslims began to immigrate to Tripura at the beginning of the 13th century (Singha: 1405 B.D.; Chaudhury, 1985). Moreover, this immigration continued in the succeeding centuries also. Now the Muslims have become an integral part of the socio-political and cultural life of Tripura. The analysis of election data on Muslim Political Participation in Tripura reveals that they have under-representation in the State Legislature and Local Bodies, based on their expected share according to population. Their involvements in political activities are less in number, and they have politically less empowered. They are also having less representation in political organisations and political activities. However, the voting behaviour of Muslim people always significant at the time of the election. They have a significant voter percentage in some Legislative Assembly constituencies in the state. It is pretty significant in a democratic polity. With the growth of population, the community is becoming increasingly decisive in the electoral politics of Tripura and, in particular, the Sepahijala, North, Unakoti and Gomati districts of Tripura. Among the total 60 (sixty) Assembly constituencies of the state, the average percentage (%) of Muslim voters is 7.19 %. However, in the 12 constituencies of the state, the average percentage of Muslim voters are high, from 12.47 to 55.62% per cent (Electoral Roll, 2013). For their numerical strength, in few Assembly constituencies, the Muslim community is increasingly becoming decisive in the battles for ballots for Tripura Legislative Assembly.

*2.1. Muslim Dominance in some Assembly Constituencies:*

At present, Muslims in Tripura form a significant position in three districts, viz, Sepahijala, Unakoti and North Tripura, and they constitute 24.59 %, 15.60 %, 14.99 % of the total population, respectively (Census 2011). The Muslims dominate several constituencies from these districts. From the Assembly elections (1963-2018), the Muslim dominant Assembly constituencies can be found. Out of the total 60 constituencies, only Muslim candidates have won 3 constituencies (Election Result, 2018). These constituencies are:
- Boxanagar
- Kadamtala-Kurti
- Kailashahar

Tripura Legislative Assembly has 60 members from 60 (sixty)Assembly constituencies of 8 (eight) districts. Among the 60 Assembly constituencies average percentage (%) of Muslim voters are 7.19% (per cent), but in the 10 constituencies, Muslim voters are of Boxanagar: 55.62%, Kailashahar: 44.71%, Kadamtala-Kurti: 40.42%, Sonamura: 39.31%, Dhanpur: 25.47%, Bishalgarh: 25.37%,

Bagbassa: 16.89%, Radhakishorepur: 13.08%, Kakraban-Salgarh:13.23%, and Jubarajnagar: 12.47% respectively, which are more than the average percentage of Muslim voter in total constituencies(Electoral Roll, 2013).In the 10 constituencies, Muslim voters have a significant share, but their political representation from their community is minor (only two). Nevertheless, suppose we see the member's position of these 10 constituencies. In that case, it is found that all the highest influential leaders of political parties and Decision Makers of the state government are represented from these constituencies. Hence, the 10 Muslim belonging constituencies have minor Muslim representatives and decision-makers.

### 2.2. *Muslims in Legislature and Governance:*

The Muslim community has been representing every assembly and government in Tripura since the post-independent periods. However, a brief review of their political representation in various elected body and government institutions shows their representation level is poor in Tripura.

2.2.1. Electoral College and Territorial Council:

An erstwhile princely state, Tripura became a part of the Indian Union on 15th October 1949 A.D., after the signing of the "Tripura merger Agreement" on 09th September 1949. It was declared a Union territory on 01st November 1957 and elevated to a full-fledged State of the Indian Union on 21st January 1972. Before establishing the Tripura Legislative Assembly (TLA), Tripura Administration was going through two types of administrative machinery: the Electoral College and Territorial Council (Brief History of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, 2020). These institutions ware consist of 30 elected members. The numbers of Muslim members were found high in Electoral College 1952 (Bhattacharyya, H. 2018), but it decreased in Territorial Councils as per proportional representation of their population share.

2.2.2. Tripura State Legislative Assembly:

Tripura Legislative Assembly (TLA) established in the year 1963 with 30 (thirty) members elected from 30 Assembly Constituencies (The Government of Union Territories Act 1963). From the 3rd Assembly 1972, the number of MLA increased from 30 to 60 (The North-Eastern Areas Re-organisation Act 1971). Muslim representation in TLA in the 1st assembly (1963) was 13.33% of total MLAs (Result of Assembly Election 1963). However, the representation of Muslim member in TLA is reduced by 50% from 1967 onwards. Moreover, the population share of Muslim remains the same as in 1963 and 1967.

The details of Muslims political representation in Electoral College 1952, Territorial Council 1957 & 1962 and the Tripura Legislative assembly (1963-2018) in Tripura and the level of Political deprivation from 1952 -2018 can be understood from the following data of table number 1.

**Table 1: Muslims representation in Tripura and the level of Political deprivation, from 1952 -2018**

| Year | Total No. of MLA | No. of Muslim MLA | % of Muslim Member | % of Muslim Population | % of Political deprivation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 | 30 | 10 | 33.33 | 21.43 | **-55.52** |
| 1957 | 30 | 5 | 16.67 | 21.43 | 22.21 |
| 1962 | 30 | 4 | 13.33 | 20.14 | 33.81 |
| 1963 | 30 | 4 | 13.33 | 20.14 | 33.81 |
| 1967 | 30 | 2 | 6.67 | 20.14 | **66.88** |
| 1972 | 60 | 3 | 5.00 | 6.68 | **25.14** |
| 1977 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 6.68 | 50.14 |
| 1983 | 60 | 3 | 5.00 | 6.75 | 25.92 |
| 1988 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 6.75 | 50.66 |

| 1993 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 7.13 | 53.29 |
|------|----|----|------|------|-------|
| 1998 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 7.13 | 53.29 |
| 2003 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 7.95 | 58.11 |
| 2008 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 7.95 | 58.11 |
| 2013 | 60 | 2 | 3.33 | 8.60 | 61.27 |
| 2018 | 60 | 3 | 5.00 | 8.60 | 41.86 |
| *Average in political deprivation in TLA (1963-2018)* | | | | | *48.21* |
| *Average political deprivation in Total periods (1952-2018)* | | | | | *38.60* |

The Fig. 1 clarifies the historical deprivation of the Muslims' political representation in Tripura. The above data shows that the Electoral College 1952, consisting of 30 members, had proper representation from the Muslim people with 33.33% of the total strength, which has beyond the population share of the Muslim Community. Their representation in Territorial Councils of 1957 decreased to 16.67%, in which the population share of the Muslims did not change. It was decreased again in the Territorial Councils of 1962, which has only 13.33% of the Muslim community. Thus, it is clear that the declining trends of Muslim political representation started from 1957 onward with 22.21% deprivation as per population proportion.

Furthermore, as per the population share of the Muslims, the political representation in the state legislative assembly, the highest deprivation level was 66.88% in 1967, and the lowest deprivation level was 25.14% in 1972. The average percentage of political deprivation of the Muslim representation in the state legislature from 1963 to 2018 is 48.21%.

Muslims Representation at Present in TLA (2018) is only 3 (three). In contrast, the expected representation of the Muslim members in the legislature as per population share (8.60%) should be 5.6 nos. of seats (5 or 6 seats).

**3.0 Trends of Muslim Votes in Assembly Elections:**

The trends of Muslim votes favouring various political parties were going to many ups and downs in various assembly elections in Tripura. The Present study observed that, in 1967 and 1972 assembly election, Muslim community were in favour of Congress (INC) party and from 1977 onward they were in favour of CPIM. In the 2018 election, CPIM also gained more Muslim support in favour of them. However, the Muslim support base favouring the congress party reduced and shifted to the BJP in the last 2018 election in most constituencies (Election Result 2018). In left front rule from a long time Muslim community favours CPIM party in various elections and hence they were called vote bank of CPIM Party in the state of Tripura. It was evident in the election campaign and its results.

It is well-acknowledged that Muslims does not consider to be BJP's vote bank. However, the party with the most significant members has redefined its approach towards the largest minorities in Tripura. A recent development has occurred after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Sonamura Sub-division at the time of the election rally of Tripura assembly election 2018. He remarks on the state's overall development and "Sabka Sath Sabka Bikash" and clearly shows that the BJP has intensified its efforts to get votes from Muslims. In the 2018 election, some of the rural areas of Boxanagar and Sonamura assembly constituencies BJP got an average of 32.62% and 27.53 % votes from the Muslim Voters, respectively (Election Result, 2018).

An analysis of the trends of Muslim votes favouring various political parties in Assembly Election 2013 and 2018 can be understood based on the election results. The present study explores that

only four (4) Constituencies with nineteen (19) polling booth reflects a 100% share of Muslim voters belonging area regarding voter percentage.

**Table 2: Trends of Muslim Votes in Favour of Various Political Parties in Assembly Election 2013**

| Assembly Constituency | No. of Polling Booths | Total voter (100% Muslim Voter) | Vote in Favour of Political Party | | | Leading party |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | CPM | Congress (INC) | Others | |
| 20- Boxanagar | 6 | 2936 | 1549 | 1321 | 46 | CPM |
| 22- Sonamura | 7 | 4003 | 2038 | 1965 | 0 | CPM |
| 53- Kailashahar | 3 | 2226 | 1036 | 1157 | 33 | INC |
| 54- Kadamtala-Kurti | 3 | 2448 | 1227 | 1181 | 40 | CPM |
| Total: 04 | 19 | 11593 | 5850 | 5624 | 119 | CPM |
| % of Votes | | | 50% | 49% | 1% | 1% lead by CPM |

*Source: Authors' compilation based on Electoral Roll 2013 and Election Result (2013), Election Commission of India, Govt. of India.*

From the above data of Muslim voters and their voting trends in the Assembly Election in 2013, it is found that out of 4 constituencies, Muslim voted in favour of CPIM in 3 assembly constituencies, and Muslim voted in favour of Congress in 1 assembly constituency. Out of 19 booths, ten booths have a maximum voter supported to CPM party and 09 booths voter supported to Congress (INC) party. Others Parties like BJP, AITC and the Independent party are not getting any significant vote from the Muslims. Out of 19 booths, CPIM got 50% votes, Congress (INC) party got 49% votes, and others got only 1% votes in the 2013 assembly election (*Election Result 2013).*

**Table 3: Trends of Muslim Votes in Favour of Various Political Parties in Assembly Election 2018**

| Assembly Constituency | No. of Polling Booths | Total voter (100% Muslim Voter) | Vote in Favour of political Party | | | | Leading party |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | CPM | Congress (INC) | BJP | Others | |
| 20- Boxanagar | 6 | 4011 | 2348 | 143 | 1403 | 117 | CPM |
| 22- Sonamura | 7 | 4322 | 2855 | 138 | 1148 | 171 | |
| 53- Kailashahar | 3 | 2210 | 1099 | 993 | 65 | 33 | |
| 54- Kadamtala-Kurti | 3 | 2323 | 1374 | 42 | 812 | 45 | |
| Total: 04 | 19 | 12866 | 7676 | 1316 | 3428 | 366 | |
| % of Votes | | | 59.66% | 10.22% | 26.64% | 2.84% | |

*Source: Authors' compilation based on Electoral Roll 2018 and Election Result (2018), Election Commission of India, Govt. of India.*

From the above data of Muslim voters and their voting trends in Assembly Election in 2018, it is found that 4 (four) Assembly constituency with 19 booths have 100% Muslim voters. All four constituencies with 19 booths maximum voter supported to CPM party (59.66%), in 3 constituencies BJP got the second position only (26.64%), and Congress got in the third position (10.22%) and the second position only in 53-Kailashahar assembly (Election Result 2018).

### 3.1. Shift of Muslim voting: A comparison between 2013 and 2018 assembly election:

In the 2013 and 2018 Assembly election, voting share in 19 numbers of polling booth centres where Muslims share 100% Voters among the 60 assembly constituency of Tripura reflects that CPIM party gained the highest percentage of Muslim Votes in both the elections. Congress was in the second position in the 2013 election, but in the 2018 election, they lost their support from the Muslim voters, and it goes to BJP in the 2018 election. BJP got the second position in the 2018

election in Muslim belonging booths. Other parties also gained more votes from the 2013 to 2018 election. The Fig. 2 can make a clear understanding in this regard:

**4.0 Political Behaviour of the Muslim Minorities:**

Political behaviour of the Muslim minorities in Tripura in general and Sepahijala district, in particular, are discussed here. The respondent's socio-economic status and attitudes towards local problems, opinions regarding national and international political issues are analysed. As the literature of Political theory, an individual's political behaviour affects his/her social environment. Theories of political behaviour, as an aspect of political analysis, endeavour to quantify and explain the influences that identify a person's political views, ideology, levels of political awareness and levels of political participation. This idea of political behaviour researcher has interviewed 200 voters as respondents from Sepahijala Tripura district, randomly taken from Boxanagar and Sonamura Assembly Constituency. The present study successfully found the overall result after analysing its survey data on "*Muslim Minorities in Electoral Politics of Tripura.*" Now we can discuss the survey data by the following:

*4.1. Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents:*

Two hundred families were selected from Sepahijala Tripura district Comprising of Boxanagar and Sonamura Assembly Constituency areas covering two Rural Development Block with four villages. Out of 200 Minority families, 100 % (per cent) of the surveyed respondents belong to Muslim communities. Concerning Social-economic status among the Muslims in the surveyed areas, it has found that 60 per cent of the respondents belong to the BPL family and 40 per cent of the respondents are belongs to the APL family.

Regarding the educational background of the respondent, it is found that 5 per cent of the respondent is Postgraduate, 16 per cent of the total respondents were graduates, 20 per cent Higher Secondary, 16 per cent secondary, 35 per cent Primary, and 8 per cent of the respondents were illiterate.

Seventy per cent of the surveyed village family type is Joint family, and 30 per cent family type is Nuclear. All the respondents speak Bengali, and English, Arabic and Hindi are also known by many respondents.

*4.2. Factors influencing political behaviour and awareness level:*

The present study explores that the respondents of the surveyed family have less awareness about politics, and their political behaviour is much influenced by many factors like socio-economic factors, issues of development and issues raised by Political parties.

The following observation would make from the survey report and its analysis:

4.2.1. Vote in consideration of individual candidate/party/issues:

The survey data depicts that 40 per cent of respondents were voted in consideration of individual candidate, 40 per cent of respondents were voted in consideration of party, and only 20 per cent respondents ware voted in consideration of issues. Thus, it is clear that the voting choice of the Majority Muslim respondents influenced by political party and candidate.

4.2.2. Vote in consideration of local issues/state issues/national issues:

The analysis depicts that 40 per cent of respondents were voted in consideration of National issues, 40 per cent were voted in consideration of State issues. Only 4 per cent of respondents were voted in consideration of local issues.

4.2.3. Factors considered in favouring a particular candidate:

It is depicted that none of the respondents considers kinship in favouring a particular candidate. Only 6 per cent of the respondents are considered a religion in favouring a particular candidate, 24 per cent of respondents consider castes in favouring a particular candidate. The majority of the respondents (70 per cent) consider others issues like Quality of personality in favouring a particular candidate.

4.2.4. Role of Religious leader/Imam in elections:

The study shows that, regarding the role of Religious leader/Imam in elections, 88 per cent of the respondent said religious leaders influence the voters and 12 per cent of the respondent opinion that religious leader remains neutral during the election.

4.2.5. Preference of kind of MLA:

When we asked the question "Do you think your MLA should be a local person or a good leader from any other place?" It is observed that 20 per cent of the respondents think their MLA should be a local person. 60 per cent of respondents think their MLA should be a good leader from any other place and 4 per cent of respondents think their MLA should be a Leader from their community.

4.2.6. Participation in voting in Tripura Assembly election 2018:

It is depicted that 100 per cent of the respondents are voted in the last Assembly election 2018.

4.2.7. Voting in favour of Political Party:

As per the data of the survey, 33 per cent of the respondents voted for the CPIM party in the last Assembly election 2018, 11 per cent of the respondents are voted to INC (Congress) party, 52 per cent of the respondents are voted to BJP, and 4 per cent of the respondents are voted to Independent party.

4.2.8. Encouragement to vote in the 2018 Assembly election:

The field survey data shows that 90 per cent of the respondents are encouraged by someone to vote in the 2018 Assembly election, and 10 per cent of the respondents are not encouraged by anyone.

It is found that 95 per cent of the respondents encouraged by political parties to vote in favour of them. Only 5 per cent of the respondents are not encouraged by any political party during the election.

4.2.9. Influences by political parties during the election campaign:

Out of 190 respondents, who are encouraged by any political party (95 Percent of the total respondent), CPIM encouraged 160 respondents, BJP encouraged 180 respondents, Congress encouraged 140 respondents, and TMC encouraged 20 respondents of the surveyed area. Thus, it is observed that more encouragement led to more gain of the vote.

4.2.10. Opinion mattered/influenced in deciding whom to vote for:

The data of the survey shows that, in deciding whom to vote for, 24 per cent of the respondents say local Political Leaders opinion mattered to them most, 40 per cent of the respondents say, Husband/Wife's opinion mattered to them most, and 16 per cent of the respondents say, Friends/neighbour's opinion mattered to them most.

4.2.11. The election campaign for a political party:

The data of the above table shows that 32 per cent of respondent supported an election campaign, and 68 per cent of respondent did not support an election campaign.

4.2.12. Convince others to vote for a candidate or a party:

It shows that 6 per cent of respondent tried to convince others to vote for a candidate or a party in the election campaign, and 94 per cent of respondent did not try to convince others to vote for a candidate or a party in the election campaign.

4.2.13. Participation in political meetings and rallies:

According to the survey, only 90% of people go to political meetings, rallies, dinners, or things like that go to any political meetings rallies, dinners, or things like that only 10% of people did not go to political meetings, rallies, dinners, or things like that.

4.2.14. Respondents involvement in political meetings, rallies for Political Party:

According to survey data, 35.55 % of the respondents go to political meetings, rallies, dinners, or things like that for the CPIM party, 50 % for BJP, and 14.45 % for Congress. Hence, it is observed that the voting preference reduced for CPIM by 1 per cent and voting preference increased for BJP by 2 per cent as per data given in the figure-3 (point No. 7) of the present study.

4.2.15. Financial support to help the campaign for any political party or candidate:

According to survey data, only 8 % of the respondents give money or other financial support to help the campaign for any political party or candidate. 92% of the respondents do not give money or other financial support to help the campaign for any political party or candidate due to their economic insufficiency.

4.2.16. Muslims as a vote bank for political parties:

100 per cent of respondents think that political parties use Muslims as vote bank. Further, 50 per cent of respondents think that all most all parties use Muslims as vote bank. Thirty per cent of the respondents think that the CPIM party uses Muslims as a vote bank, and 20 per cent respondent think that Congress party use Muslims as vote bank. Thus, we found that the trends of politics of Muslim vote bank exist in the study area like as national-level politics.

4.2.17. Parties Manifesto influenced Muslims voting choice:

According to the survey, only 80% of people knows about the manifesto. Moreover, 20% of people do not know about it. According to the survey, 62.5 % of respondents say BJP's Manifesto influenced their voting choice, and only 37.5 % of respondents say CPIM's Manifesto influenced their voting choice. Manifesto of congress party does not influence Muslims voting.

4.2.19. Political engagement and political status of the Muslim community:

The survey data depicts that 90 per cent of respondents think that the political engagement of Muslim people gets the better political status of the community. Only 10 per cent think it does not; instead, they prefer educational and economic engagement for their high status.

4.2.20. An essential need for government initiatives:

It is observed that the respondent's families have low socio-economic status, and most of them belong to extreme poverty. Hence there is an essential need for government initiatives.
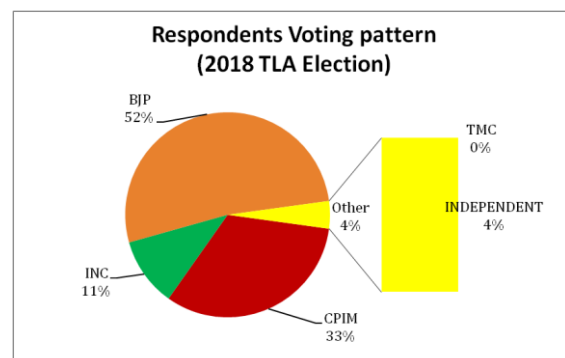
**Fig.1: Muslim Representation in Tripura (1952-2018)**
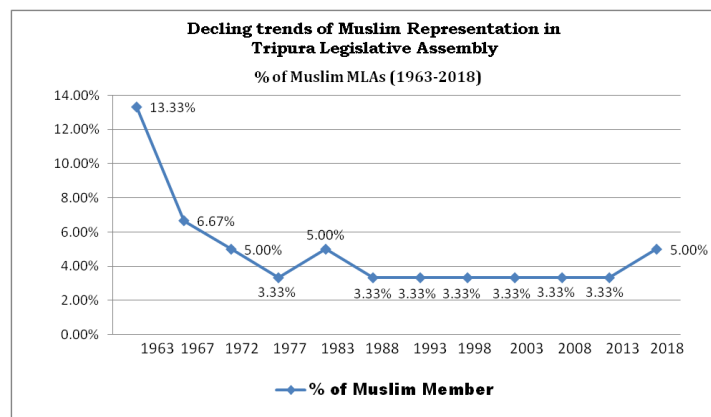


Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Fig. 2: Comparison of the shift of the Muslim Voting from 2013 to 2018 Assembly Election in Tripura**
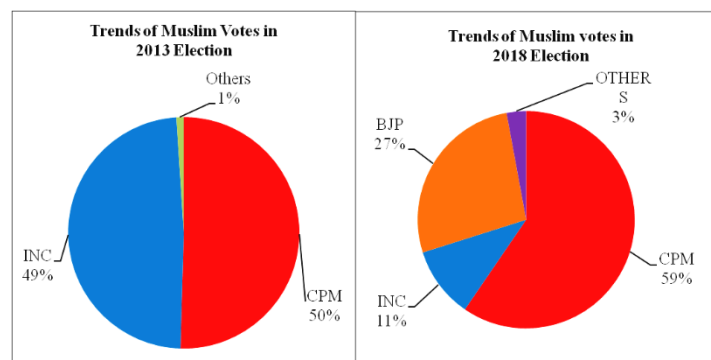


Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Figure 3: Voting pattern of Muslims in favour of Political Party**



Source: Prepared by authors based on Field Survey, 2018

## 5.0 Summary and Conclusion:

The above study reveals that the role of the Muslim Minorities in the electoral politics of Tripura is significant, and their political behaviour in Tripura influenced by several factors. Muslim minorities are politically less aware due to many socio-economic problems and the terrible intention of some political parties for using Muslims as vote bank without concerning the development of the communities. All the respondents think that political parties use Muslims as vote bank due to their socio-economic backwardness and socio-political identities. Parties are not wanted to change the community's situation to gain continuous support by using only a small group of people to give opportunity in the local level benefits. It is depicted that the 'Party Manifesto' influenced their voting choice. Muslims are interested in Political issues and participation in the campaign during the election; however, they have less opportunity to participate in a higher political position in parties and decision-making bodies. It was also evident in the various assembly elections' candidate profiles.

Analysis of this survey has shown that a large proportion of the Muslim electorate feels politically powerless because it believes that the minority community controlled by a small group of powerful and selfish individuals or leaders who use public office for personal gain. With the attainment of Indian independence and the grant of a franchise to the citizens, voters have to play a decisive role in democracy. There are still severe handicaps, no doubt, which people have to overcome to choose their leaders wisely. Muslim minorities are socially, economically, and educationally underprivileged. Factors like class, money, groupism and intimidation and violence in elections still operate in India and the state. It is prevalent in our study area (Sepahijala district), where ignorance and poverty of the electorates are used to benefit the leaders and wealthy people of the area. Now, it is time for minorities to become part of the mainstream population of India. The purpose of a democratic system is to stimulate competition, increase prosperity and improve standards of living. Political parties playing vote bank politics liberally dispense freebees to minorities for their votes, but the people need to understand that every benefit has its cost. Thus, there is an essential need for political consciousness among the minorities and active participation in the development administration of the state.

Based on the present study and its findings, it has been realised that:
- There is an essential need for political consciousness among the Minorities and active participation in the development administration of the state.
- Muslim should be treated as a part of democratic politics and not as a vote bank.
- Representation of Muslim leaders in the decision-making process needs to be increased.
- The minority people are more deprived of education, economy, employment, health care, communication and other sectors. It is necessary to change their living style by introducing scientific method through science and technology to ensure sustainable economic development.
- Political awareness should be increased among the Muslim peoples by the creation of Non-governmental Organisation and other socio-legal voluntary organisation.
- Minorities must be socialised in the mainstream of the political system, which is the only way to prevent them from becoming alienated and hostile towards the system, which is the worst challenge of the contemporary world.
- Political parties should create scope for Minorities to enter organisational positions.
- Problems of marginalised communities with a particular focus on the Muslim minority should be identified. The government should take inclusive policies such as 'Minority Sub Plan' as like TSP for Tribals.

- Finally, there is an essential need to conduct research studies and scholarly attention regarding the Minority development issues at a micro and macro level.

**References:**

Ahmed, Hilal (2014). "What is a Muslim vote bank?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 08th March 2014, http://www.epw.in

Ansari, Iqbal A. (2006). *Political Representation of Muslims in India: 1952-2000.* New Delhi: Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Bhattacharya, Alak and Sumon Ali (2018). *Minority Politics: A Behavioural study of Tripura.* Agartala: VyasdevPrakasani.

Bhattacharyya, Harihar (2018). *Radical Politics and Governance in India's North East: The Case of Tripura*, Routledge: Studies in South Asian Politics.

Chakraborty, Dr. Anjali (2009). "Muslim Inhabitants of Tripura: A Demographic and Socio-Cultural Profile". *Folklore and Folkloristics*, Vol. 2.

Chaudhury, Jagadish Gan (1985). *A Political History of Tripura*, Kolkata: Inter India Publication.

Election Result, (1963 to 2018). Tripura Legislative Assembly Election, Election Commission of India, Govt. of India.

Electoral Roll, (2013). Election Commission of India, Govt. of India.

Engineer, Irfan (1995). 'Politics of Muslim vote bank', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 197–200.

Government of India (1951 to 2011). Reports of Population Census of 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011, New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General of Census.

Hasan, Zoya (2009). *Politics of Inclusion: Caste, Minorities, and Affirmative Action*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kumar, Devendra (2014). *Muslim politics: At a crossroads*, Livemint, http://www.livemint.com, accessed: 5/9/2016.

Kumar, Sanjay (1996). "Muslims in Electoral Politics", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 2/3 (Jan. 13-20, pp. 138-141.

Mainuddin, Md, (2011). "Socio-Economic Conditions and Political Representation of Indian Muslims: A Study of West Bengal", *Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce*, Vol.– II, Issue –4, Oct. 2011.

Nath, M. K. (2009). "Muslims in Electoral Politics of Assam", PhD Thesis, Guwahati: University of Guwahati.

Rahaman, Mijanur (2018). "The Question of Muslim Development and Politics in Tripura". PhD thesis, Tripura University, Agartala.

Roy, Meenu (2000). *Electoral Politics in India: Election Process And Outcomes, Voting Behaviour And Current Trends*, New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Sachar Committee Report (2006). Report on Socio-Economic Condition of the Muslims. New Delhi: Government of India.

Singh, KC (1450 BD). Rajmala Ba Tripurar Itihas, Agartala: Akshar Publication

The Government of Union Territories Act 1963. Government of India.

The North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act 1971. Government of India.

The Tripura Legislative Assembly, (2020). Brief History of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, Retrieve 2020