

Editorial

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LS Poll : CAB factor and Manipur

With just 10 days and 18 days to go for the outer Manipur and Inner Manipur Lok Sabha Poll respectively, political parties across the state are engaging in hectic poll campaign across the state. Promises after promises, criticisms after criticisms among rival candidates fill the air of Manipur. It is not only in this tiny state of Manipur but across the entire country that similar situation is notice. We are witnessing the biggest festival of democracy.

But the air is murky in the state of Manipur and the so call biggest festival gives neither joy nor hopes to the people. In outer Manipur Parliamentary constituency altogether 8 candidates are in the fray.

The Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Naga People's Front (NPF), National People's Party (NPP), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), North East India Development Party (NEIDP), Janata Dal United all field their candidate for the Outer seat. One Independent candidate is also contesting the election.

For the inner Manipur Parliamentary Election 11 candidates are in the fray. And the poll date is on April 18.

With the campaign gearing up by all the political party peoples' mind seem to be diverted from where it should be not only for the state of Manipur but also from all the people of the North East.

People across the north East seem to forget that the entire North East, particularly the state of Manipur was nearly burnt due to decision by the political party in power at the Center (i.e.) that is the BJP. The decision to pass the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 at turned the entire North East states into a battle field like situation with violent protest everywhere. The situation resumed to normalcy only after the BJP led government failed to table the Bill at the Rajya Sabha.

Leaving aside other issue, it is natural that CAB should be an issue for the state of Manipur and that of other North East state. Political analyst suggested CAB - an issue of the Lok Sabha Election. But surprisingly BJP President Amit Shah during an election campaign at Assam said that CAB will be introduced in the country if BJP comes to power. This was again followed by Ram Madhav, another leader of the BJP, while talking here in Imphal at Hotel Classic Grande during a so called "Intellectual Meet" of the BJP. He was quoted by newspaper and electronic media as saying that the CAB will not affect the state of Manipur or North East.

As for other political party particularly the Congress, it is clear that they will oppose tooth and nail if non - secular law like CAB be put up for passing at the Parliament. President of the Congress Party Rahul Gandhi during his visit in the state had stated that his party will definitely challenge if any party force to pass such a Bill.

The Communist Party, the North East India Democratic Party (NEIDP) and others whoever contesting the election make their stand clear on the issue of CAB. Yes, they will finally oppose the CAB.

So, if one takes a deep look into the political theatre, this lok sabha election should be between those who are against the CAB and those who are supporting the CAB.

What is more surprising the confidence of the BJP in this lok sabha election. If the party win and give mandate to their candidate it is a clear indication that the majority of the people support the CAB and the hue and cry was voice of the minority. This justification may not be correct as the candidates contesting with "no CAB" issue may get votes but if distributed to the 10 other than a minority but magic number may push the BJP candidate as its elected representative.

On the issue of CAB this news paper had time and again highlighted its probable impact to the people of the region.

In defence of the "MeiraPaibis"

By-MutumYoiremba

With the Utlou incident and many incidences preceding it, this article comes at a time in when the public opinions are divided into two simple views: One, that the MeiraPaibis are wrong, it is an encroachment of freedom, and hence an outburst against this "old outdated institution". Two, which was that what the young women did at the party, was the public defecation of social moralities and that the society must be defended against this defecation.

But it is my not so humble attempt to complicate this simplicity and create a third opinion different in totality and in opposition to both; in the hope of more such different multitude of opinions. It comes out of the concern that we have been stupefied by "English education". We as a society push for raising the educational standards through "English" or "Western" education, but have that only led us to promotion of public and social stupidity and promotion of more obscurity in our judgements? Has our version of the English education failed in creating any critical thinking? Have we just become willing slaves of modernity? These are a few questions this writing intends to touch on.

I choose to engage with the "feminists" of Manipur first, because for some miraculous reasons western education has blessed them with this word called "feminism", although very literally not the concepts, ideals, the principles or the debates on the variants of feminism. The incident at Utlou led to one side of the public opinions that converged at the denouncement of the MeiraPaibis. And from some magic done by the status of being an English educated man or woman or gay or lesbian or trans or whatever, they seem to champion the cause of feminism, explicitly or covertly, directly or indirectly; and it became cries of the "feminists". The cries echoed fascinating pretentious ideas of a just social order but with rather convincing taglines like "Stop Mob Justice", "personal freedom is at stake", "what is wrong with women drinking?", etc and etc and so on and so fold.

But why do I say pretentious ideas or mock at the feminists? Because this brand of feminism even so prevalent in the English educated folks has nothing to do with the ideals of gender equality or of the abolition of social hierarchy based on sexual preferences. Rather, the party at Utlou that was close to a rare party if not exactly one, is being celebrated now by these feminists

as the triumph of feminism, of modernity and of liberty. So these sites of western electronic music and red liquors and jeans and bleached blonde hair that look like we are in Miami Beach are supposedly the sites of modernity, of the upcoming generation's liberal culture's win against the conservative, oppressive, old and outdated culture that seeks to imprison us in "Phaneeks" and "Khudeis". The party at Utlou was one such site and these Yaosang rock festivals and DJ music and the booming Cafes in Manipur are such other sites. These are the sites we will most often find these feminists of the modern world, we will probably find these feminists of the modern world lurking on Facebook, expressing and propounding the ideas of liberty too. But, my intentions are to prove the pretentiousness and thereby the stupidity of their feminism;

although only in the hope of promoting a different brand of a rather more radical feminism that can actually overthrow the feudalistic patriarchy our society is so deeply soaked in and any other forms of patriarchy that emerges hence. I would call this the "de-colonial feminism", and this form of feminism is about practicing an indigenous feminism. In contrast to the ideas of equating anything to do with modernity and being liberally tolerant as feminism, it seeks to look at the ideals of modernity and modernisation from a critical and apprehensive lens. No doubt we live in the age of globalisation, and that sooner or later we will have to be a society embracing modernisation. But de-colonial thinking does not equate modernity with modernisation. Modernity is the political and cultural system that came from Europe first through British colonialism directly, persisted through economic policies adopted by the Indian government, and continues through globalisation by selling the western culture through films and advertisements. Modernity then sells us "ways to live our lives", of "economic aspirations" of a "city and modern lifestyle" without actual modernisation.

Modernisation is not about adopting cultural values that support the buying of more finished foreign products but it is about bringing in "new technological infrastructures", in educational institutions, in health, in constructions, of giving up of old inefficient ways of producing in a society; of the knowledge capacity built up to learn the new technical knowhow. Examples are China, Korea, Japan that did not embrace

modernity, but embraced modernisation. They did not go on the western cultural path to globalisation and dropped their culture, but embraced modern technologies and the knowhow of generating those technologies. But what modernity does is only produce a lifestyle that creates buyers of the new lifestyle, and hence the cafes, and raves parties and music festivals. While we look at ourselves and realise we don't have any technological knowhow to actually build any of the products we are so eager in using as a part of modern lifestyle.

What modernity also does is conceal the deep patriarchy that persists in our society through pretentious new cultural practices like creating equal sites of access like the cafes, music festivals which was not possible in the old culture. This new culture makes it seem like now that since women can wear jeans it is changing now that women are promoted to be more English educated it is more liberating. But this English education it promotes is education only up to a point where she can be a faithful consumer of this new culture. Because this new culture needs everyone to aspire for the western lifestyle and in order to do that access to the global network of communications like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Satellite TV, etc is needed; and English education makes the access easier and faster. We can concede, these global networks can give connectedness and can be liberating and useful, but one other thing it also does is promote a western lifestyle, it is evident from the contents of advertisements as a testament. But the point being that the English education we currently have does not enable us to develop a critical faculty of the mind to question the lifestyles being sold but only furthers it. Modernity is least interested in is breaking patriarchy, it is only interested in making us consumers and the party at Utlou was a celebration of this modern consumerism and not feminism.

This is when I come in defence of the MeiraPaibis. For centuries, the economic system that complements this modernity has caused so much wars and exploitation. The west itself that we so much aspire to be has had their fair share of problems of patriarchy. The illusion created by this modernity has given access to women the lifestyles equally enjoyed by men of drinking, of partying, of more social lives. But it has never given equal pay, never solved sexual discrimination, rape, equal participation in politics. If we

are to say this problem persists everywhere and it is universal, I am sorry but that is not feminism but patriarchy in guise of feminism. The "English educated feminists" even with their access to western and global critiques of modernity has blatantly embraced modernity as the site of liberating feminist politics. But on the contrary modernity creates uncritical and passive consumers of western lifestyle not active agents of political struggle. Feminism and the fight against patriarchy will certainly persist there too by it's a hole deeper than the feudal patriarchy and conservative cultures that reign over us. The patriarchal relations in the old conservative culture are more explicit and identifiable, like curfew after dark for young women, which makes it easier for us to actually set more concrete political objectives in the fight against patriarchy like ending this curfew. The liberating force lies then not in modernity, but the mechanism of resistance the "uneducated" women have for ages built up while English educated modern "feminists" are busy on Facebook and Cafes.

The progressive forces in the west has been trying to organise women for more than three centuries and it has not been able to come up with an institution as organised and based on a voluntary principle as the "MeiraPaibis". But my defence rests here on the existence of the institution itself not the objectives it has; the ability for women to organise a collective and the potential it holds in shaping politics, and we have seen that it can overturn political order like in Nupi Lal. But what differentiates the Nupi Lal from the Utlou incident or restaurant drives is the political objectives set out by the institution of MeiraPaibis. And despite having this immense collective weapon called the institution of "MeiraPaibis" if we are unable to challenge patriarchy, but instead further patriarchal practices like the looking at, of drinking women as "whores", where are you English educated Sahebs and Mem Saheb? With your access to the world you can set the objectives right. Your denunciation of MeiraPaibis is not your call but the force of modernity speaking through your mouth and trying to dismantle an institution that can fight patriarchy in feudal and in modern forms. Come over to this side, we already have the mechanisms to fight patriarchy, you are giving it away to the men; the sites of modernity is no greener pasture for changing the social order we so much yearn. It has nothing but English manures!

The writer is a part of the minuscule voices that differentiates and denounces modernity but embraces modernisation. The writer is a research student at JNU, trying to unlearn modernity. Contact email: myoi497@gmail.com

Elect candidates with 4C's :

Character, Caliber, Capacity & Conduct – Vice President

PIB

The Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu has called for concerted efforts to eliminate the menace of terrorism, tackle climate change, remove social inequalities, alleviate poverty and minimize the urban rural divide to build a peaceful, harmonious and happy nation.

Speaking at a felicitation function organized by the Vice President's friends and well wishers in Visakhapatnam today following the recent conferment of Doctor Honoris Causa upon him by the Peace University of Costa Rica in recognition of his contribution to the rule of law, democracy, sustainable development and peace, he emphasized that Peace was prerequisite for progress of any nation. Any kind of conflict or strife would prevent developmental prospects of the region. "One cannot pay attention to development if there is tension", he added.

Shri Naidu said that it was the duty

of every citizen to ensure that the social harmony in our country was not disturbed in any way. He called upon the media to conduct a performance audit of parties and candidates and place a progress report before the people to enable them make an informed choice. He said the people too must seek accountability and performance reports from candidates and the parties.

Referring to the trend of politicians switching parties, the Vice President said that such people must resign to their posts before seeking re-election.

Referring to the importance of the electoral process in strengthening democracy, he said that people should elect representatives who possess Character, Caliber, Capacity and good Conduct. Asking people to exercise their franchise, the Shri Naidu said that vote was not just a right but a responsibility bestowed upon the citizenry by the framers of

the constitution.

The Vice President said that India has always been a proponent of peace and believed in the philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which treats entire world as one family. He said that India, being a votary of peace and non-violence from time immemorial, always wishes to have cordial relations with all countries and peoples around the world.

Referring to the Honorary Doctorate conferred upon him, the Vice President said the honour was not for an individual but a reflection of the global acknowledgement and recognition of the age-old values of peace and harmony embedded in Indian philosophy.

Observing that he felt doubly honored to have received the Honorary Doctorate at a time when the world is commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji, who had demonstrated to the world the power of non-violence, he

emphasized that peace was the prerequisite for progress of any nation. Any kind of conflict or strife would prevent developmental prospects of the region.

Saying that India has been a victim of the menace of cross-border terrorism, the Vice President said that Terrorism could never be treated with kid gloves. He asked the world community to come together to 'fight out and root out' terror.

Shri Naidu said that the United Nations must conclude at the earliest the deliberations on the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism proposed by India and take action against those promoting terror. 'We need to name & shame those who promote terror as a state policy and cut their aid, he added.'

The Vice President also urged every citizen to strive to protect the environment, reduce pollution, promote greenery, conserve water bodies and ensure that development does not disrupt natural resources.

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