CHAPTER - VIII

ELECTION OF MEMBERS
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The election is the process of selecting the officers or representatives of an organisation or group by the vote of its qualified members. It is to be distinguished from the alternative methods of selection by appointment or by lot.¹ In other words, election is a form of procedure, recognised by the rules of an organisation, whereby all or some of the members of the organisation choose a smaller number of persons or one person to hold office of authority in the organisation.²

The elections may be both direct and indirect. The direct election is the process by which the representatives of the people are elected by a system of ballot. The representatives elected by a system of direct election need not be experts in Governmental affairs or specially trained or equipped. While it is desirable that the legislative bodies contain leaders of the communities, persons qualified by experience and ability, the bodies should be representative. But sometimes direct election

process is not conducive to effective functioning of a democratic system. The voter in a democratic system is limited to a choice between candidates none of whom he may want elected. To diminish somewhat the evils of the direct election system some countries provided systems of indirect or double election whereby the whole body of voters elect an intermediate body of electors, who in turn elect the officials or representatives. In India, as for example, the President is elected by a process of indirect election while the members of the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies are elected by a process of direct election.

The Sixth Schedule lays down that the members of the District Council other than those nominated shall be elected on the basis of adult franchise. The methods procedures etc. of election shall be determined by the rules to be framed by the Governor for the first constitution of the district and thereafter by the District Councils, if they so desire, subject to the approval of the Governor. Thus it is seen that the Sixth Schedule provides for direct election of the members.

Electoral Division

The Rules provide that there shall/a general election for the first constitution of the District Council and

3. Sub para 1 of para 2 of the Sixth Schedule.
4. Sub para 6,7 of para 2 of the Sixth Schedule.
the subsequent elections shall be held on the expiration of its term or on the dissolution of the council.\(^5\) The Governor shall demarcate the boundaries of each constituency based on certain principles. First, each constituency must be equal to the other so far as population is concerned. Mathematical equality is not a possibility and therefore there may be some variations which the Governor is supposed to ignore. The electoral divisions made prior to the general election of 1971 show that Amreng had a strength of 3850 while Langfer had a strength 8200. Similarly Kopili had a strength of 7900 while Singhahan had a strength of 4500 only. The same thing was true prior to the general election of 1978 when the council constituencies were delimited. The Langhin was the biggest constituency having a strength of 13,549 while Sarupathar had a strength of 3857 only. Similarly, Karkanthi had an electoral strength of 10,591 while Hamren had an electoral strength of 4056 only.\(^6\) Thus the electoral divisions of the council were not equal to one another. Although certain difficulties are admitted in delimiting the constituencies such variations as we have seen should be discouraged altogether.


6. Figures collected from the Deputy Commissioner's office at Diphu. The electoral strength of the general elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962 could not be located in the office.
Franchise and Electoral Rolls

The Sixth Schedule categorically stated that the members of the District Council shall be elected by a system of adult franchise. This, however, does not include the nominated members. The system of adult suffrage may have certain merits and demerits. The most important demerit is that it is not applicable to a society where majority of the people are illiterate. But the most important merit of the system is that it is the only process by which democracy can be better realised. It may be argued that in the autonomous district adult suffrage was meaningless as more than 80% of the people are illiterate. But in fairness to the system it may be argued that the system itself had witnessed a gradual improvement of the entire situation within a short span of less than three decades.

The rules provide qualifications for electors also. In order to become a voter (i) one must be a citizen of India and ordinarily resident in a constituency for not less than 180 days, (ii) not below the age of twenty one, (iii) not of unsound mind and (iv) not disqualified for voting under the provisions of electoral law. But a non tribal residing in the district consecutively for a period of 12 years only is entitled to vote. The qualifications are reasonable. Non imposition

7. Sub rule 1, 2, 3 of Rule 128 of the Rules 1951.
of restrictions on the persons other than tribals will surely fail to preserve the tribal identity of the district.

The Rules framed under the Sixth Schedule provide that there shall be an electoral roll for each constituency and the electoral roll prepared for the election to the legislative assembly of Assam shall be the electoral roll of the council election. Although the Deputy Commissioner supervises the preparation of the electoral rolls certain irregularities were noticed as had been evidenced by the proceedings of the council meetings. The correct and proper enumeration of voters' list had been considered very important specially in the context of the tribals being gradually outnumbered by the non-tribals in the autonomous district. It is, therefore, suggested that there should be separate electoral rolls for the council constituencies to eliminate the anomalies.

8. Sub rule 1,2 of rule 129 of the Rules 1951.
9. Jobindra Hanse while participating in the discussion on the budget during 46th session held on 1.3.63 alleged that only 2000 voters were enlisted while 5000 genuine voters in one of the western constituencies of the district were deprived of the voting right.

Similarly, S.K. Tisso also alleged that while the names of the dead persons were included the names of living persons were omitted. Tisso's speech had a reference to his resolution No.13 moved during the 74th session dated 22.9.69 of the council.
Nomination

The Governor must notify the date fixed for the poll, the number of seats available for contest, constituencies at which the election will be held, the dates on which the nominations should be presented and the places where they will be accepted, the date on which the scrutiny will be taken up and the date of the poll. But all such steps will be taken in consultation with the Returning Officer. The second step is the filing of nominations. Each nomination shall be proposed and seconded duly. The candidate whose name is proposed must agree to the proposal in writing. He must also accept one of the symbols mentioned in the list of symbols. The Returning Officer may reserve any of the symbols in the list in favour of a political party provided that party polled not less than 4% of the valid votes polled by all the contesting candidates of that party in the preceding election.10 The following is the list of symbols provided in the rules.

1. Rising Sun
2. A bunch of paddy
3. Tiger
4. Cart
5. Pig
6. Duck
7. Fish
8. Dhenki
9. Banana Tree
10. Plough
11. Open Umbrella
12. Butterfly
13. Bottle
14. Egg on the Basket
15. Pen and Ink Pot
16. Lantern
17. Arrow on the Bow
18. Deer
19. A Boy and a Girl
20. An eye

10. Inserted by the Constitution of the Karbi Anglong District Council (12th amendment) Act, 1971.
Although 'Lantern' had been chosen by the candidates of the Karbi-A-Darbar since the beginning of the council it was not an approved symbol of the organisation till 1978. In 1978, the Returning Officer of the council election declared categorically the 'Lantern' the approved symbol of the Karbi-A-Darbar. Since other parties did not fulfil the requirements of the rules, no symbols had been reserved for them till date.

The third step is the scrutiny of nomination papers. The candidates, agents may raise objections. The Returning Officer shall see to the objections, if any, and give his decision. He shall allot a symbol specified and publish a list of candidates. The candidates may withdraw before the date specified for the purpose.

Poll

The Governor, by notification shall fix the hour of poll. The voting shall be by ballot. The Returning Officer shall make necessary arrangement for poll. He shall appoint presiding and polling officers for different polling stations and the officers are to be provided with necessary election materials. Counting of votes is taken up as soon as the poll through out the district is over. Immediately after the counting the result is published.

11. No.KA/DC/EL-7/77-78/25C dated Diphu the 6.4.78.
Return of election expenses

The Rules framed under the Sixth Schedule categorically stated that every candidate who had been nominated as a candidate had to submit a return of expenses within 60 days from the date of the publication of the results. Failure to submit the same within the given period will disqualify him as a member of the council. The maximum amount of election expenses of a candidate (including personal expenses) shall not exceed Rs.4000.00. The amount of election expenses should be enhanced to at least Rs.6000.00 considering the present rise in prices. The records reveal that altogether 8 candidates did not lodge their returns in the general election of 1957 and 22 in 1971. Although apparently the number seems to be bigger in 1971 the increase was absolutely proportionate. There were 25 contestants in 1957 and 66 in 1971.

Election disputes

The Rules provide for the decision of election disputes. Any candidate or elector may file an election petition against a successful candidate before the Governor within 60 days of


13. Return of election expenses pertaining to the general election of 1952, 1962 and 1978 were not available.
the publication of the results. The Governor may appoint a commissioner to hear and report on the petition. The Governor's decision in respect of the election petition is final. Up till now two election petitions were filed. One in 1965 and the other in 1971. The records relating to the first were not available. But it is gathered that the election was set aside and a fresh election was ordered. Regarding the second, the petition was filed by Mohanlal Sukhani against the election of Bilton G.Momin. The petition was rejected. 14

Forfeiture of deposits

Altogether 6 candidates forfeited their security deposits in the general election of 1962 and 60 in 1978. The records relating to the other three general elections were not available. One of the noticeable features in the two elections is that there had been a sharp increase in the number of contesting candidates. It was 32 in 1962 and 134 in 1978.

Contestants and campaigning

The number of candidates contesting the general election of 1952 was not known. The Deputy Commissioners office did not maintain these records. It is known that there were smaller number of candidates and in most of the constituencies the candidates were returned unopposed. This had happened mainly

due to two important reasons. First, the people of the newly created district did not have experience in election and hence they did not take interest in the election. The second reason was the lack of proper communication throughout the district. Altogether twelve members were elected to the first District Council. But unfortunately two members died before they could complete their term of office. Khor Sing Terang the GEM elected from the Borjan, Sarupathar and Chandra Sing Teron from Nomati died. The elections for these 2 constituencies took place. Chatra Sing Teron from Nomati and Sar Rongpi from Borjan, Sarupathar were declared elected unopposed for the reminder of their predecessors' term.

The general election of 1957 had, however, witnessed a gradual change. There were altogether 22 candidates for 9 seats. Three candidates were elected uncontested. Excepting in one where there was multi-cornered contest in all others there was straight contest. There was, however, some kind of electioneering although the Durbar was the only organisation having a popular support amongst the masses. There were no major issues on the eve of the election and therefore the Durbar did not find any difficulty to penetrate deep into the masses. The national parties did not have any base in the district.

The general election of 1962 was the landmark in the history of the elections of the council. There were altogether 32 candidates for 11 constituencies. One seat was
declared elected unopposed. One of the noticeable features of the election is that the number of multicornered contests had increased enormously compared to the general election of 1957. There were multicornered contests in 6 constituencies. The main plank of electioneering was the hill state demand. The All Party Hill Leaders Conference appeared for the first time in the political scene of the council election which spearheaded the movement for a separate hill state. Till 1962, the Darbar did not identify itself as a political organisation although it took active part in the preceding elections. It was a socio-cultural organisation and the candidates contested themselves as independent. The emergence of the A.P.H.L.C. as a political force in the autonomous district compelled the Darbar to identify itself as a political organisation. This is one of the noticeable features of the election.

The next general election was supposed to be held in 1967. But as stated earlier, the term of the council had been extended up to 1971. The delimitations of the constituencies had increased the strength from 12 to 20. In 1971 the general election of the council took place. Out of the 20 seats, 2 seats were declared elected unopposed. The contests took place for 18 constituencies. Of the 18 constituencies multicornered contests took place in 15 constituencies. Thus it is noticed that there had been a sharp increase of the multicornered
contest although here was only one in 1957. Another noticeable feature of the general election of 1971 was the emergence of a greater number of contestants and the total strength stood at 66. The increase itself was disproportionate compared to the increase in the number of the constituencies. The electioneering on the eve of the election was not done on local issues. It was mainly done on national issues. The creation of the hill state excluding the autonomous district did not have any impact on the electioneering. The Congress-Karbi-A-Darbar alliance had no difficulty in getting through the election.

The general election of 1978 had witnessed new developments. The constituencies were again delimited and the strength of the council increased from 20 to 26. It is interesting to note that there were 134 candidates for 26 seats on the average 5 candidates for each seat. Moreover, another noticeable feature of the election was that there were no uncontested returns. In the previous elections there had been a number of uncontested elections ranging from 1 to 3. Another noticeable feature of the election is that out of 26 constituencies there were multicornered contests in as many as 23 constituencies. In Langhin, Karkanthi and Dhashiri constituencies there were straight fights. The highest number of candidates contesting for a single seat was eleven. That was in the Deopani constituency. The next highest was in Howraghat. The campaign was not
On any major issue. But one noticeable feature of the election was the emergence of the national political party i.e. the Janata Party. The old alliance of the Congress-Darbar did not break and the candidates filed their nominations as Darbar candidates for all practical purposes. Both the Janata and the Darbar contested all the seats. The emergence of a local party on the eve of the election is another noticeable fact. That was the Karbi Anglong Peoples' Conference. The K.A.P.C. contested 13 seats.

Outcome

The records relating to the general election of 1952 were not available. It is, however, gathered that all the elected members, were supported by the Karbi-A-Darbar.

In the general election of 1957 there was contest in nine constituencies out of 12. Of the 9 elected members 2 were elected by a minority vote. Harsing Engti of the Mikir Hills (Block II) got elected by the smallest margin of 70 votes while Sai Sai Terang of Jamunapar, Langfer by the biggest margin of 507 votes. Siba Kanta Tisso, on the other hand, polled the highest percentage of votes i.e. 416 votes.

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16. Jorjaram Ronghang of Nomati polled 939 votes out of a total 2122 cast while Devendra Nath Shyam polled 779 votes out of total 2122 votes cast. Shyam was elected from Naga Rengma, East Rengma and Borpathar constituency.
out of a total of 571 against his rival who polled only 155 votes. The results of the general election of 1957 had given an understanding that there had been the gradual erosion of the impressive image of the Karbi-A-Darbar. Song Bey was defeated in the hands of Raidang Engti, an independant in the Duarbagori constituency by a margin of 312 votes. Similarly, Langtuk Terang a prominent member of the Darbar had to meet the same fate when he was defeated by his rival by a margin of 456 votes in the Naga Rengma, East Rengma and Borpathar Constituency. The total number of votes cast in both the constituencies was 1188 and 2122 respectively.

Similarly in the general election of 1962, 12 members were elected of whom one was elected unopposed. Of the 11 elected, 4 were elected by a minority vote. Siba Kanta Tisso of Block I got elected by the smallest margin of 5 votes only while Sar Rongpi got elected from Borjan, Sarupathar by the highest margin of 857 votes. One of the noticeable features of the election is that the Darbar could not improve its position which it had lost in the general election of 1957. Song Bey the president of the Darbar was again defeated by Devendranath Shyam, an independant in the Naga Rengma, East Rengma, Barpathar constituency by a

margin of 122 votes. Although the margin was not remarkable it was a great challenge to the Darbar itself. It is gathered that the defeat of Bey had certain reasons. First, Bey was a Christian, Second, the character of the electorate was heterogeneous and the non Karbis constituted a majority in the constituency. Third, Shyam a non Karbi, having a very good hold in the constituency, was refused nomination by the Darbar which the electorate did not accept. The defeat of Longkam Teron a Darbar candidate in the hands of H.R. Mech in the Nomati constituency had similar reasons. First, the constituency had a majority of non-tribal votes mainly of refugees migrated from the East Pakistan who were subsequently given permanent settlement. Second, there were larger number of contestants and therefore the votes were divided and the candidate got elected by a minority vote. In the year 1965 two seats one of Duarbagori and the other of West Kongkhang fell vacant. The first seat fell vacant due to the filing of an election petition and the second due the sudden and premature death of Chandra Sing Teron. Fresh elections were held as a result of the petition and Raidang Engti was declared to have been elected. Mohan Sing Teron, the younger brother of late Chandra Sing Teron was elected unopposed from the
We at Rongkhang constituency. Shyam and Mech were subsequently taken in as members of the Darbar after they got themselves elected. Thus it is seen that the Karbi-A-Darbar had gradually become the organisation of the non Karbis although previously it was confined to the Karbis only.

The general election of 1971 witnessed new developments. Some non-Darbar members were elected from different constituencies. Davidson Hanse, a young Christian got elected from Amri Constituency by defeating his nearest rival Indra Sing Deori by a margin of 242 votes. Similarly Lovelywell Durang, a Christian graduate got elected from Amreng constituency by defeating his Darbar rival Siba Kanta Tisso by a small margin of 26 votes only. Another notable figure was Khudra Bora a prominent C.P.I. member who got elected for the first time by defeating his only rival Biren Sing Engti by a margin of 556 votes. Bora contested earlier on two occasions but could not return. B.G. Momin was another notable figure who got elected on Darbar ticket. Similarly, Rajen Timung a prominent member of the Karbi Riso-A-Darbar, the youth sing of the Darbar got elected. Thus, the general election of 1971 had witnessed some new faces in the District Council. A statistical analysis will show that Long Sing Tisso got elected by the largest

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18. The results of these elections were not traceable. The things were recorded on the basis of interviews taken with the members of the council of 1962-1971.
margin of 1666 votes while Khoya Teron got elected by the smallest margin of 9 votes only. The position of the Darbar had remained the same considering the proportionate increase in the number of the constituencies.

The results of the general election of 1978 witnessed a complete new picture. Most of the stalwarts of the old regimes were very badly defeated. The most notable defeats were that of Mohan Sing Teron in Rongkhang, Long Sing Tisco in Kapili, Khudra Bora in Howraghat, Sar Bey in Langfer, Hamuram Mech in Nomati, Sai Sai Terang in Borjan, Sar Rongpi in Bokajan, Devendra Nath Shyam in Deopani, Resulla Haimbo Rengma in Nilip and Singnot Terang in Durbagori. Most of the defeated members remained as members of the council consecutively at least for two terms. The majority of the members elected in the general election of 1978 were new comers having no experience previously and were backed by the Janata Party. The second notable feature of the election was the fact that the majority of the elected members were elected by a minority vote.19 Chutra Sing Teron,

19. Davidson Hanse polled 1213 votes out of a total of 3227 votes polled, Bronson Engti polled 1158 out of 3942, Khor Sing Bey polled 1953 of 4072, Sing Ronghang polled 1572 of 6167, Brajendra Langthasa polled 809 of 3289, Joy Sing Kathar polled 590 of 1745, Siba Kanta Tisco polled 1048 of 4772, Sadhan Deb polled 2164 of 8629,...
Rangdang Teron, Nila Mohan Brahma, Dorsing Terang, Bidya Sing Engleng, Joy Sing Doloi, Kunjalal Hagjer and Lunse Timung were elected by a majority vote. It is interesting to note that Chatra Sing Teron had been elected for the first time by contest. Since the bye election of 1956 Teron had been elected unopposed till 1971. Nila Mohan Brahma was elected from the Langhin constituency by defeating his only rival by the greatest margin of 2491. Similarly, Bidya Sing Engleng and Chatra Sing Teron also defeated their nearest rivals by the bigger margins of 2021 and 1966 votes respectively. Ranjit Tisso got elected by the smallest margin of 19 votes only.

A close examination of the party wise representation will give an understanding that out of 26 elected members only 9 seats had gone to the Darbar, one to the Karbi Anglong Peoples' Conference and the rest to the Janata backed independent members. The results of the 1978 general election had confirmed the loss of the credibility of the Darbar as a political force in the council.

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19...Gujar Teron polled 3138 of 6762, Sarsing Teron polled 1298 of 4286, Mangal Sing Engti polled 1192 of 4998, Sarthe Sing Terang polled 1712 of 4868, Ranjit Tisso polled 1287 of 3644, Rohini Bey polled 1675 of 5542, Kanta Ram Mech polled 2266 of 5235, Prabin Shyam polled 858 out of 4310, Rajen Timung polled 1122 of 4046 and Dhoni Ram Taron polled 1142 of 2766 valid votes polled.
Wastage of votes

The results of the 1957 general election did not record any wastage of votes. It is surprising to note that the people of the autonomous district having no experience of election till 1952 were not committing wrongs in the exercise of their right to vote. But whatever may be the reason the authenticity of the results could not be questioned. It might be so that the Returning Officer ignored minor mistakes and declared all votes cast valid. The percentage of wastage varied from time to time and the same being 3.5 p.c. in 1962, 5.3 p.c. in 1971 and 2.9 p.c. in 1978. Thus it is seen that there had been some improvement in the general election 1978.

Conclusion

From the above analysis we come to the following conclusions:

(1) The election results of the council show that some members of the council were elected unopposed since the beginning of the council till the general election of 1971. It was only in 1978 contest took place in all the constituencies of the council. It shows that the people were indifferent to elections and that too was mainly due to the absence of the system of adult suffrage till 1952. Moreover, this also proves that there were no sufficient number of capable persons to contest elections.
(2) The electoral divisions formed on the eve of the general elections were not done on the basis of population. That is why, the electoral strength of different constituencies varied considerably. Care should be taken to see that each constituency is equal to the other in respect of the electoral strength.

(3) There was no correct enumeration of the voters list as a result of which the genuine voters were deprived of the right to vote on several occasions. It is desirable that separate electoral rolls for the District Council constituencies should be prepared and the old practice of following Assembly electoral rolls should be immediately stopped. This has been considered necessary because the qualifications of the voter for the council election differ from that of the Assembly election.

(4) Another noticeable feature of the council election is the sharp increase in the number of contesting candidates in the general election of 1971 and 1978. The maximum number had been witnessed in the general election of 1978. The increase in the number of candidates, increased the number of candidates forfeiting security deposits also.

(5) The Karbi-A-Darbar which was the only organisation in the beginning played a dominant role in the council politics till the general election of 1971 had lost its
credibility in the general election of 1978. The Karbi Anglong Peoples' Conference, a regional party could not establish itself as a political force.

(6) The results of the council election specially of 1978 proves that majority of the council members were elected by minority votes. This is due to the greater number of candidates contesting in the election.

(7) For the first time in the history of the council a lady contested in the general election of 1978.