

Indian Political Parties in Malaysia: The Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Indian politics in Malaysia is playing an important role in the Indian community. Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) is the established party in the Malaysia and represent the Indian community. The role of the MIC is to serving the community. In other hand, there is other formation of Indian parties in Malaysia which is consist of Indian Progressive Front (IPF), People Progressive Party (PPP) and other minority political parties. The problem in the MIC lead to the numerous formation of parties in Indian community. This cause a lot of problems in the Indian Political parties where the Indian community lost trust to the Indian Parties. The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges that occur in the Indian political parties in Malaysia and to identify the reason behind those challenges occur. This study will use social identity theory to analyze the data. Qualitative approach was used in this study this study through interview the politicians, academician and civil society. The thematic analysis method is used to examine and answer the research objective. This study is significant since it gives an input about the challenges faced by the Indian political parties in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Indian politics, Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), Indian Progressive Front (IPF), People Progressive Party (PPP).*

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INTRODUCTION

The population of Indian in Malaysia is 2.9 million over 31.7 million people (Department of Statistics Malaysia [DOSM], 2010) and there are five Indian Political parties that represent the Indian community in Malaysia. The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) was formed to represent the Indian community in Malaya to get independence for the Malaya and for the purpose of serving the community. The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) is the established party in the Malaysia and it is coalition with the dominating party in Malaysia. However, the other Indian political parties such as IPF, PPP, MMSP and MIUP formed after splitting from the MIC because of internal problems in the party.

The Indian Progressive Front (IPF) formed by the Pandithan but the party is based on the caste and it is not getting support from the BN for the coalition and the community. In other hand People Progressive Party (PPP) was multi-racial party and join the BN coalition in the aftermath of the riots in 1969. The party were led by the Seenivasagam brothers from Ipoh. Besides, there is another formation of a new party through the rally held on 25th November 2007 known as HINDRAF (Hindu Rights Action Force). The Malaysia Makkal Sakti Party (MMSP) was constituted and founded by Dato R.S Thanenthiran. Another new party formed in 2007 was Malaysia Indian Unity Party (MIUP) by the K.S.Nalakarupan was once a member of People Justice Party (PKR).

Furthermore, the lacking acceptability of strong political support from the community leads these leaders being totally beholden to their national leader and it is hardly have an independent choice to create substitute strategies to coherent the interest of the community (Ramasamy 2001). In other words, all these parties tried to have a coalition with the National Front (Barisan Nasional or BN) but they failed due to the abandonment of political belief changes political discourse towards personality based politics (Ramasamy 2001).

Hence, this study is designed to examine the challenges that occur between the Indian Parties in the Malaysia which is led to the divide between the parties. In addition, the research will observe the reason why this challenges occur.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on qualitative research method, through an analysis on both, primary and secondary source of data. Primary data in this research

consists of interview, questionnaire and focus group. The semi structure interview use for collect information and the interviewer are the politicians, academicians and civil society. The secondary data for this research is include record room , media reports, newspaper , minutes of meeting, and governments publications, books , thesis, journals and online database. This are the main references for this study.

This study emphasizes thematic analysis to investigate all the information that focus on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset. Thematic analysis will assist the researcher to identify , analyzing and reporting pattern within the data, consequently providing discernment into primary and secondary data related to Indian politics in Malaysia and mainly the challenges that faced by Indian political parties in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted in the relation to Malaysia Indian politics parties in general. There are several main themes that can reflect the studies carried out such as Indian leadership problem, the role of mass media, defeat in 2008 General Election and rise of Hindraf rally and caste problem among the leaders and parties.

Indian leadership problem

What makes Indian politics have internal issues? There is many problems in the Indians politics that being discuss in the various articles. Firstly all the authors like P.Ramasamy (2004) and Sigh (2013) had mention that the main challenges faced by the Indian community are leadership problems among the Indian political parties in Malaysia. The Indian leader has the capability to steer the community, however the former MIC President Dato Seri Samy Vellu was never agitated the problem faced by the Indian community although there is demonstration occurring Hindraf. He also had made some improvement to elevate the Malaysian Indian Community. Mohamed Osman mention that, the corporate wealth of the Indian community has vanished and the community's educational standard seems to be in its degraded situation (Mohamed Osman, 2007). He pointed that, not only that Samy Vellu does not able to push using his power on issues that related to the alleged offense of Indian rights in Malaysia. Moreover, he uses his power within his community (Mohamed Osman, 2007). Visnu (2013) said that the Hindraf, HRP, IPF, PPP is the result of MIC's leadership failure. Moreover Visnu (2013) mention

that the Indian leadership mentality in this country needs to be reshaped. Not only that the current leaders need to be 'educated' with leadership lessons or forced to resign in order to allow the new breed of leaders to take the position.

The Role of Mass Media

Mass media played an important role in the Malaysia politics and especially in the Indian politics in Malaysia. In particular, the mass media through newspaper was being the most important factor for the Indian community to join the MIC and get to know what is happening in the Malaysia and India politics. However, the newspaper was replaced with the internet for this generation people where they get to know all the information and news through online website. Yet, sometimes the news tend to be fake news and it has made the community to react aggressively and create a bad impression about the Indian parties in Malaysia. Leong (2009), had expressed in his paper that the new media brings implication in the Malaysia politics and among the people itself. The media had its own power to adapt the people by giving the news that happen in a minutes to the society. Many incident that occur in the past present is provided in the Internet and make the people to easily watch and read all the information. According to the Silverstone (2007, p 44) he had expressed about the media that we look for the "ability for decision, for intellectual, inventive and moral judgment, in our crisis with the world, both that of face to face and that of arbitrated experience". Leong (2009) had pointed that Malaysians have been gradually visible to the power of and coercion towards new media.

Defeat in 2008 General Election, and the rise of Hindraf Rally

The political tsunami that occur in the 12th General Election in 2008 had tremendous effect on the Malaysia politics. The election shown that the highest vote for opposition coalition in Malaysian history and the 12th General Election made a huge difference in the Malaysia political arena and in the Indian politics. Lim & Mun (2009) said that the 12th Malaysia General Election shown that the arising of People Power against suppression of dissatisfactions over communal politics, deteriorating social-economic conditions "3s" factors and continues marginalization of Indian community. The election had been contribute to moral defeat to the Barisan Nasional (BN) are incessant destruction of frustrations under communal politics and the marginalization of Indian ethnic.

On the contrary, Lim & Mun (2009) express that the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) by Makkal Sakti arise due to the marginalization of Indian community in Malaysia. Lim & Mun (2009) express the problem that arise in Indian community in Malaysia such as battle for cultural superiority emerged, body snatching, restricts religion conversion and temple demolition cause the Indians in Malaysia lost hope and they non- Muslim willing to vote an Islamic based party like PAS rather than secular coalition of BN in the 12th General Election. In addition Lim and Mun (2009) point that the combination of social – economic segregation and deficiency together with repeated of the problems has become a powerful rallying pints for Indians activists mainly Hindraf.

Caste problem among the leaders and parties

Caste problem is still raising in Malaysia Indian politics. Caste and politics are not a new issue in the Malaysian Indian community, however the voting along with caste played a factor determining the outcomes (Visnu, 2013). Prof .P Ramasamy, Deputy Chief Minister of Penang is also pointing that caste is still a mobilizing factor among Indian politics in Malaysia. Besides that only certain individuals from specific caste are allowed to rise to leadership positions. Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Periyar EV Ramasamy were fighting for the purge of the caste system. However, Visnu (2013) express that in Malaysian context, the caste system is the root cause of our political and economic failure among Indians in Malaysia. Lack of unity and a sense of belonging and their attitude which is holding back the Indian community. However the caste itself is not a prevailing factor in influencing the route of the Indian community. The main stumbling block of Indian advancement in Malaysia is the practice of racial and religious discrimination in the social, economic, administrative and political areas.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social identity theory

The social identity theory was found by the Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s (Lim, 2009; Mariner, 2006). The identity theory according to the Race Convention defined to discrimination on the basis of race, descent and national or ethnic origin which has covered a wide range of government policies. It is about politics right to economic, social and cultural rights (Lim,

2009; Mariner, 2006). Muniapan and Govindaraju (2012) explained the identity theory how an individual labels himself or herself as a member of a group, nation, social class, ethnic group, language group, gender and others. The norms developed within a community guides the behavior and enable the members forms collective identity (Haslam, 2001; Hogg, 1995 ; Jenkins, 2004). Hogg (1995) had explains that social identity whether individual or group is through on their past conducts and behaviors and such formations of identities are not necessarily sustainable in the future.

This theory is according to Brewer (1979) and Brown (1995) used widely and become key findings or can be said that one of the most famous theories which is the emergence of in group favoritism under the most minimal of conditions. According to the researcher Huddy (2001) identity formation cannot be explained by the salience of a group term. There is four key issues which is the subjective meaning of identities, component of research on ethnic and racial identities, strong identities have been found to weakened national unity and promote prejudice and intergroup antagonisms. Conover (1988), Miller , Gurin , Gurin & Malancuk (1981) said that this theory builds on a large body of work that forms the importance of particular group membership in shaping political attitudes and behavior.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATION AND SUGGESTION

Indian in Malaysia is a marginalized minority in Malaysia which is positioned among the political domination of Malay and the economy's supremacy of the Chinese (Ngarajan, 2008). National Economic Policy (NEP) was presented in 1970 to 1990 offers a blueprint for an exhaustive supporting action platform for the *Bumiputera* and it make the other community feel that they have been discriminated (Kaur, 2011). The NEP policy was to eliminate of identification of race with economic function and minimization of poverty introduced by the British and also improving *Bumiputera* economics for developing relation among inter- ethnic (Kaur, 2011). Moreover, Indian society itself separates from themselves in many aspects such as linguistic communication where and faith. Due to these problems there where occur differences in cultures, differences in the religious values, and different political ideology. Malaysian Indian society separated from other society because they are weak in politics aspect and their socioeconomic differences than other society.

Malaysian political parties are generally breach according to the ethnic lines fist and with the ideological and religious. The dominant party in Malaysia

is National Front (Barisan Nasional or BN) which is consist of three sub party United Malaysia National Organization (UMNO), Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Malaysian Congress (MIC) had joined the coalition. MIC was formed to represent the Indian community in Malaya to get independence for the Malaya and for the purpose of serving the community. However, there was a formation of a new party in the Indian Community after the MIC due to some internal issues in the MIC such as leadership problem, caste issues and coalition between leaders (Ramasamy, 2001).

The primary focus of this study is to examine the challenges that influence among Indian political parties in Malaysia. This challenges will be investigate why Indian political parties facing these challenges. The purpose of this study, which is mainly focus on the issues of Indian political parties in Malaysia, to examine the challenges and to find out the reason behind those challenges. The findings of this study lead to the new prospect by determine the current political situation.

Furthermore, as mentioned above on the insufficiency of the research on the related topic in Malaysia, this study will be an important revolution to the Indian Politics in Malaysia. Through my literature review readings, I can relate to this since it is very difficult to find journals or books which analyze in an in depth. There is scholars that had studied on the Indian politics in Malaysia and there is not done specifically on the challenges and the reason behind those challenges. This study will be one of the important breakthrough to the related knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Indian in Malaysia as a marginalized minority in this country they faced a lot of problem. The paper is examine the challenges occur between Indian parties in Malaysia. There is a lot of factors that cause problem within the Indian parties in Malaysia. Furthermore, the main cause is the internal problem in the MIC that lead to the establishment of other parties. Besides, there is others factors that cause problem in the Indian politics parties. We need to look deeper the factors that lead to the problem occurrence in Indian politics. Moreover, the challenges has to be identified in order to gain back support from the community. Therefore, it is the time to seek cooperation among the Indian political parties to find out the reason behind those challenges to encounter this problem.

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