



THE ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR OF ST COMMUNITY OF CACHAR : With Special Reference Of Assam Legislative Assembly Election, 2021

Wazi Uddin Choudhury (M.A Gold Medalist)

KRISHNA KANTA STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, ASSAM, INDIA

ABSTRACT

Election is part and parcel of democracy. It is the beauty of democracy that the citizens can elect their representatives through election from time to time. All the sections of Indian society irrespective of caste, class, gender and linguistic affiliations, can participate in the electoral process. However, it is essential to make a deep analysis of the way the citizens are practising their democratic rights in the decision making mechanism. A sound democratic system of a country is determined mainly by aware and active participant citizens. Unlike other communities of India, the scheduled tribe communities are backward in almost all spheres of life. The same is in case of north east India also. Therefore, an attempt is made in this article to understand the electoral behavior of the ST community of Cachar district of Assam. Two villages of Lakhipur Constituency, namely Hatirhar Nagapunjee and Kaptanpur Nagapunjee were selected for this study to understand the mindset of the ST citizens in the recent days.

Keywords : citizens, election, community, vote, electoral process

INTRODUCTION

In a parliamentary democracy elections are held from time to time. Election of public representatives for state as well as National Assemblies under the supervision of Election Commission is supposed to be held in parliamentary democracies. It is visible in the elections held in recent decades that participation of citizens in the electoral process is increasingly high. The voter turnout and citizen's participation in the elections held in the first decades after the Independence were comparatively very low.

In the State Legislative Assembly Election of 2021 of Assam the voter turnout was very high compared to the previous elections. It shows the faith of the citizens in the democratic process. Political involvement of citizens is characterized by citizen's attending in political gatherings, understanding the political debates, exercising voting right, attending leadership positions etc. Participation of citizens in the electoral process is an important means for downtrodden sections of the society to uplift themselves.

The present study is mainly focused to analyze and understand the type of electoral participation of Scheduled Tribe community of Cachar district of Assam .

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to examine the electoral behavior of the scheduled tribe community in the 2021 Legislative Assembly of Assam.

METHODOLOGY

The method followed in this study is field survey. The primary sources for collecting information were observation and interview. In addition to these formal methods, informal interactions with various groups of ST organizations and their members were done.

Also, Secondary data from different secondary source materials like books, Social Science Journals, databases , newspaper articles, magazines and seminar reports were used in this study. The Scheduled Tribe villages which were selected for comprehensive analysis and study for this article were from Cachar District of Assam and they are-

- ✍ HATIRHAR NAGA PUNJEE (SINGERBOND PT II)
- ✍ KAPTANPUR NAGA PUNJEE (KAPTANTANPUR PT I)

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The present study was carried in Lakhipur Constituency of Cachar District of Assam. As per the 2011 Census, the total population of Lakhipur Sub-Division is 2,81,595, where males are 1,42,855 and female are 1,38,740. The Assembly Election of Assam was held in Three phases in Assam from March 27th to 6th April of 2021.

The Present study was carried forward by keeping in mind various aspects of Political Participation like-

- ☞ Voting
- ☞ Campaigning
- ☞ Organizing Party Meetings
- ☞ Contesting in Elections
- ☞ Participation in Political gatherings
- ☞ Membership in Parties
- ☞ Working as an Agent

From the selected Scheduled Tribe villages , data were collected after interview of different respondents. The following tables have been used for this purpose. A total of 50 respondents (25 males & 25 females) from Hatirhar Naga Punjee and Kaptanpur Naga Punjee have been taken for the survey.

Table A.

Did you vote in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election of 2021?

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	22(88%)	3(12%)	25
Female	21(84%)	4(16%)	25

Av. Percentage 86% 14%

From the above mentioned table, it is obviously visible that –

- ✓ More than 85% of respondents responded that they voted in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election of 2021.
- ✓ Only 14% of the respondents did not vote at all.

After the analysis of the data mentioned in Table A, it can be easily understood that the voter turnout of this particular location is high in Assembly Election of 2021.

Table B.

Keeping aside voting , in what other forms did you participate in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election of 2021 (e.g Campaigning, Organizing party meeting, working as an agent, just attending meetings, none of them)?

Gender	Campaigning	Organizing Party Meetings	Working As An Agent	Just Attending Meetings	None Them	Of Total
Male	7	3	3	6	6	25
Female	4	1	0	15	5	25

From the statistics mentioned in the above mentioned Table B, it is very evident that the citizens of Hatirhar Naga Punjee and Kaptanpur Naga Punjee participated in various forms in the Electoral Process. However , it is worth mentioning that inspite of their involvement in the election, the politicians do not remember them once the election is over. The cunningness of both the parties as well as the leaders is very clear.

Table C.

What was your motive of participating in the electoral process ?

- a. Self interest
- b. Feeling of responsibility of a citizen
- c. Monetary benefits
- d. I do not know

Gender	Self interest	Feeling of responsibility of a citizen	Monetary benefits	I do not know	Total
Male	9(36%)	5(20%)	7(28%)	4(16%)	25 (100%)
Female	2(8%)	4(8%)	9(36%)	10(40%)	25 (100%)
Av. Percentage	22%	14%	32%	28%	

It is very clear when we see the table that-

- 22% of the respondents said that they participated in the political process with a motive of self interest.
- 14% of the respondents participated with a sincere reason of being a citizen of the nation.
- According to 32% of the respondents, their main motive was monetary benefit.
- An aggregate of 28% of the total respondents did not even know properly the reason of participating in the electoral process.

Therefore, this table shows lack of proper understanding of the ethos of the constitution and electoral mechanisms of India by the citizens of this particular locality.

Table D.

Do you regularly discuss the politics and political affairs around you?

Gender	Yes	No	Total
Male	19 (76%)	6 (24%)	25
Female	10 (40%)	15(60%)	25

Av. Percentage 58% 42%

Through the process of political socialization, the citizens of a country become politically aware and in this way the voters become familiar with the political affairs going on in a particular state or locality. Some important agencies through with citizens of a nation become politically socialized are family, friend circle, classroom, cinema , movie theaters etc.

Regarding politics and political affairs the table D shows us that

- ❖ 58% of the respondents regularly discuss the politics and political affairs of the locality, state as well as the country.
- ❖ 42% of the respondents do not regularly discuss it.

FINDINGS

After analysis of the statistics from table A to table D , the major findings of the present study are-

- ✓ The political awareness of the citizens of these localities is less in comparison with the other communities of the country.
- ✓ The voter turnout is constantly increasing.
- ✓ The motives of participation of these people in the electoral process, as the survey reflects, show lack of proper awareness of the ethos of the constitution as well as democratic system by the citizens.
- ✓ The political mindset of the citizen is gradually changing. They are comparatively realizing the significance of political participation.

CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that the citizens of scheduled Tribe localities are politically becoming conscious gradually. It is also a fact that although statistics of voter turnout and political awareness of the schedule tribe are going forward in a positive direction, they are much below the average statistics of other communities of the country. Rather than exerting pressure for their rights and demands on the shrewd politicians and political parties, they are merely used as vote bank by the political parties and politicians. The fact, that their involvement in political activities is more than ever, is a positive sign for the democratic process. However , the gaps in comparison with other communities have to addressed and every stakeholder should work in this direction.

REFERENCES

Chaube S.K. (1985), Electoral Politics in North East India, Madras University Press, Madras.

Das, B. (2014). Political Participation of the Tea Tribes Community : A case Study of Sonitpur District ,Assam, India. Germany : Scholar's Press: p. 5

J.B. Ganguly (1996) . Sustainable Human Development in the North Eastern Region of India, Regency Publication , New Delhi.

P. Laskar (2019). Electoral Participation of the Tea Tribe Community in Assam: Special Reference to Lok Sabha Election of 2019

Assam Assembly Factbook, Lakhipur Assembly Constituency {Key Electoral Data of Lakhipur Assembly Constituency (Vidhan Sabha)}

Indian Village Directory.

