



Electoral Participation of Garo Tribe in Mendipathar, Meghalaya A study of 2018 Legislative Assembly Elections

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Abstract

Democracy depends on participation, and people take part in a wide range of activities. A higher commitment from more people is needed for campaigning, lobbying, or protests, but only for a short period of time. Through the electoral process, the populace is able to freely select their representatives. Voting involves the most individuals but takes the least amount of time. More citizen involvement will provide the people a healthy democracy. Along with the Khasi and the Jaintia, the Garo tribe is one of Meghalaya's most important ethnic groups. In this study, we explore and analyze Meghalaya's Mendipathar Constituency's voter participation in the 2018 Legislative Assembly Election. This research employs both primary and secondary data sources and is based on a field survey.

Keywords: Elections, Electoral Participation, Referendums, Garo Tribe, Mendipathar constituency

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Introduction

An election is a crucial component of democratic government. Elections are an essential component of our democratic system because they allow for the selection of candidates for public office in a manner that is impartial. Without exception, every eligible adult citizen in a democracy possesses the fundamental right to cast a ballot. Voting is without a doubt the most important institution of political involvement in a democratic society since it allows citizens to express their opinions on public issues. Voting is an essential method that serves not only as an essential process for reaching consensus but also as an essential approach for institutionalizing conflicts that exist between various groups. Examples of electoral participation include voting, running for office, taking part in election campaigns, volunteering for political parties, and getting otherwise involved in the electoral process. Voting is another kind of electoral involvement. It is possible that impoverished

and disadvantaged people gaining some measure of empowerment through participating in elections.

The political relevance of the Garo Tribe in Meghalaya is of the utmost importance. This is especially true in recent years. The results of elections in Meghalaya are heavily influenced by the choices made by the various Garo tribes and their members. The participation of the Garo Tribe in electoral processes has developed into the most important of any of the other tribal or ethnic groupings found in the state. The purpose of this study is to understand and provide an explanation for the voting participation of the Garo Tribes in the Meghalaya Mendipathar Constituency. This study focuses on the political engagement of Garo voters in the Mendipathar Constituency in order to establish the significance of the Garo tribe in the electoral politics of Meghalaya. Specifically, the study looks at how Garo voters cast their ballots. Using the participatory theory of democracy, which



encourages participation from all sides and seeks to improve the people through participation in the decision-making process, the election behavior of the Garo tribe in the Mendipathar Constituency is being researched. This is done using the participatory theory of democracy.

The Garo Tribes in Meghalaya

The Garo Hills, which are in the southwest corner of Assam and lie between latitudes 25° and 26° N and 89° and 91° E, are where the Garo people reside. The 3,140 square mile-long Garo Hills are surrounded by the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya to the east, Goalpara District (Assam) to the north and west, Bangladesh to the south and southwest. It is believed that Tibet is where the Garos first appeared. They were from a region in Tibet known as "Tarua." They are a part of the Bodo Group's Tibeto-Burman subfamily and belong to the Tibeto-Chinese family. As A.chiks, the Garos prefer to refer to the country they live in as A.chik land. The Garo are the second-largest tribe in Meghalaya and are a matrilineal group from North-Eastern India. They make about one-third of the state's population and are primarily found in the Garo Hills in Meghalaya, as well as a few districts in Assam and West Bengal. In their hillside communities, they have long practiced shifting cultivation, or jhum.

The Mendipathar Legislative Assembly Constituency in Meghalaya is one of many legislative assembly constituencies where the Garo Tribe predominates. Because of this, we selected this constituency to look into some of the factors that affect how the Garo tribe votes.

Research Objectives

- To examine the electoral participation of Garo Tribes in the Mendipathar Constituency of Meghalaya in the 2018 Legislative Assembly Election.
- To study the voting patterns of the Garo tribes in the Mendipathar Constituency.

Research Methodology

The study is based on a field survey method that was carried out in the Garo Hills district of Meghalaya's Mendipathar Constituency. The material is gathered from both primary and secondary data sources. Personal interviews are conducted according to the interview schedule in order to determine their level of participation in electoral activities, their awareness, interest, and so on. Secondary data was gathered from articles, books, newspapers, journals, and other sources.

Results and Discussion

Our study region is the Mendipathar Constituency in Meghalaya's North Garo Hills District. On July 27, 2012, the District of North Garo Hills was created, with Resubelpara serving as its administrative centre. According to 2011 census, the total population in North Garo Hills District was 1,80,291. Previously, the East Garo Hills District was in charge of managing it. This District includes the four Assembly districts 37-Kharkutta (ST) AC, 38-Mendipathar (ST), 39-Resubelpara (ST), and 40-Bajengdoba (ST) AC. The district of North Garo Hills covers 1,113 square kilometres. The Garos and Rabhas are the two communities with the largest populations in the District. The people's primary source of income is agriculture. The only district in the entire state of Meghalaya with rail access is the North Garo Hills district. Mendipathar was Meghalaya's first train station. The building of the railway line opens up a new route for outside trade. Except for the Hajong tribes, the Garo and Rabha make up the majority of the population of Mendipathar.

Based on a variety of electoral involvement criteria, including as voting, campaigning, mobilizing, contesting elections, attending meetings, and party affiliation, among others, we are aiming to analyze the level of electoral engagement of the Garo tribes in the Mendipathar Constituency. The author attempted to explore and evaluate the degree of voting participation among the Garo



tribes in the Mendipathar Constituency in this section of the study.

The election participation of the Garo tribes is discussed solely with the help of Mendipathar Constituency respondents. As a result, we have chosen only the Mendipathar Constituency to represent them all. A few questions were posed to Mendipathar

Table 1

	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	34	42.5%	31	38.75%	65	81.25%
No	6	7.5%	9	11.25%	15	18.75%
Total	40	50%	40	50%	80	100%

Table 1 displays the Mendipathar Constituency voting percentage for the Garo tribes. I asked the sample respondents if they had cast a ballot in the 2018 election in order to better understand and evaluate electoral participation. 81.25% of the sample's respondents gave positive answers. Just 18.75% of survey respondents claimed they didn't vote this time (2018 Legislative Assembly Election). As a result, this is good news for India as a democratic country. It should be mentioned that this community participated in the most recent Legislative

Table 2

	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Election campaign	12	15%	9	3.75%	21	26.25%
Arranging party events	3	3.75%	0	0%	3	3.75%
Volunteering Duringa conference for elections	8	10%	3	3.75%	11	13.75%
Participated in an election as a poll worker	3	3.75%	1	1.25%	4	5%

Constituency residents in order to evaluate their voter turnout. The following tables are used to discuss it. From the Mendipathar Constituency, we gathered 80 respondents for the study—40 men and 40 women. For the interview with the respondents, an interview schedule were employed.

Assembly Election of 2018 in greater numbers than normal.

Increased participation increases the sustainability of a democratic system. Many different factors influence people's opinions and behaviors during the election. One of these explanations is Downs' Theory of Rational Choice's discussion of the benefits of voting. This theory contends that voters make decisions based on their own self-interest, and those parties or candidates that win votes do so because they stand to benefit from the outcome. It is mysterious and constantly unpredictable how intriguing a role elections play in society. Any election system must always have ambiguity as its foundation.



Attend electoral gatherings	9	11.25%	24	30%	33	41.25%
None	5	6.25%	3	3.75%	8	10%
Total	40	50	40	50%	80	100

In figure 2, With the exception of voting, we have examined how the Garo people of the Mendipathar Constituency engage in elections. Participation in elections can take many different forms, such as running for office, organizing gatherings for parties, volunteering at conferences for elections, and going to polling places. To gauge their level of electoral involvement, it is

crucial to ascertain whether they fit these requirements. They were questioned about their various forms of election participation. It's intriguing information that 26.25 percent of respondents don't participate in election-related activities. They have said with apathy that political parties only get in touch with them to ask for votes and then stop caring about them after the election.

Table 3

Garos Tribes	Male %		Female %		Total %	
Personal curiosity	10	12.5%	5	6.25%	15	18.75%
Social assistance	9	11.25%	7	8.75%	16	20%
Profit-making	4	5%	2	2.5%	6	7.5%
Interest in political parties	12	15%	9	11.25%	21	26.25%
No response	5	6.25%	17	21.25%	22	27.5%
Total	40	50	40	50	80	100

Table 3 shows the reasons for taking part in the electoral campaign. One of the most crucial prerequisites for electoral participation is election campaigning. Various motives were offered by the respondents, including personal curiosity, social assistance, profit-making, interest in political parties, and so on. Personal interest in a certain political party has been credited by 18.75 % of those polled.

Another aspect is political party interest, with 26.25 % saying they participated in the election campaign because of a particular political party. Surprisingly, 7.5 % of respondents stated they are less concerned about which party wins and forms the government because the campaign is for the sake of money or profit. 27.5 % of people replied negatively, indicating that they were uninterested.



Table 4

	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	32	40%	29	36.25%	61	76.25%
No	8	10%	11	13.75%	19	23.75%
Total	40	50	40	50%	80	100%

Table 4, shows how frequently the Garo tribes talk politics and public affairs with one another. Political socialization is the process by which a citizen or voter becomes acquainted with their political environment and, as a result, defines their political viewpoint. Our families, friends, and peer groups can all be considered key political socialization agents. When asked how often they talk politics and public affairs with others, 76.25 % responded positively, while 23.75% responded negatively. It suggests that this group's interest in elections or electoral politics has been steadily expanding.

Voting and joining a political party are only a small fraction of what is meant by "electoral involvement," which is a vast concept. The electoral politics of Meghalaya have traditionally been heavily influenced by this tribe. It is crucial to remember that the tribe's members' worldview is gradually evolving and that they are becoming more aware of the importance of political participation for a better future.

The 2018 elections for the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly took place on February 27, 2018. There were 25825 voters altogether in the Mendipathar Constituency, with 13070 men and 12755 women. 10943 men and 11256 women cast ballots in the Mendipathar Constituency simultaneously, making the overall voter turnout 22199, and the polling percentage was 85.96%. 9, 12,849 men and 9, 29,314 women cast ballots in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Election, resulting in a total voter turnout of 18, 42,163.

Conclusion

The aforementioned analysis indicates that the Mendipathar Constituency's Garo tribes are steadily becoming more involved in voting. Voter turnout was higher than in previous elections, according to the Mendipathar Constituency of the 2018 Legislative Assembly Election, however the benefits of genuine democracy were not enjoyed by them. Most people have no idea that political parties utilize vote banks. So, it's a puzzle. The vast majorities of people choose their candidates through members of their own caste because they live in rural areas and lack the education necessary to choose candidates, parties, etc. To ensure a better future for themselves and their community, the Mendipathar Constituency's Garo residents are gradually changing their way of thinking and realizing the importance of voting. We've seen how many Garo people vote, and they have a significant influence on Meghalaya's political climate.

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