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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ELECTORAL POLITICS AND CHAKMA VOTERS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH: AN ANALYSIS OF IMPLICATIONS OF CHAKMA VOTERS IN THE FOUR ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES

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Abstract

Chakmas are one of the three refugee groups settled in Arunachal Pradesh that migrated from then East Pakistan between 1964 and 1969 due to alleged religious persecution by their native establishment and the environmental disaster. Since then it has been more than five decades of their stay in Arunachal Pradesh. It is perceived by various civil societies, student organizations, and the general public of the State that these Chakma have a huge number of voters in some assembly constituencies of the State and play a determinant role in deciding the electoral outcome to a great extent thereby reducing Indigenous voters to a minority. This paper attempted to know the strength of Chakma voters across the concerned assembly constituencies of the State from their first enrollment in the electoral roll in 2003 till 2023 and the significance of their votes in determining the electoral outcomes in these constituencies by thoroughly studying, examining and analyzing the data obtained from the office of the chief electoral officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar. The study found that at least in one out of four constituencies, the Chakma voters constitute the second largest vote bank and play an important role in determining the electoral outcomes in that particular constituency.

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Introduction:-

Electoral politics is a phenomenon where people elect their representatives either directly or indirectly to be their voice and to look after their grievances of day-to-day life. It is an essential ingredient of modern democratic political systems around the world or we can say Electoral politics is part and parcel of parliamentary democracies. The root of electoral politics can be dated back to ancient Greece where the earliest form of election started. However, these elections were quite different from the modern election system. In those days right to cast a vote was confined to a few influential men, which means the concept of 'universal adult suffrage' was not in existence. New Zealand was the first country to grant voting rights to women in the modern democracies. Thereafter, democracies around the world granted voting rights to women folk. India adopted the 'Westminster model' of parliamentary democracy and conducted its first general elections after independence in 1951 to elect the first government of Independent India. For decades the Indian National Congress (INC) was in power under the leadership of prominent politicians like Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Indira Gandhi. For the first time non-Congress party came to power in 1977 when the Janata Party under the leadership of Morarji Desai won the elections. The incumbent ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), came to power for the first time in 1996 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Over the years in these elections from 1951 till date, the electoral politics have been driven by various

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factors such as nationalism, development agenda, progressive foreign policy, casteism, religion, charisma of leaders, ideological commitment, money, etc.

All over the world, elections are regarded as the cornerstone of democracy (Gupta 1985:1). In fact, election outcomes are considered as the expression of the will of the people. After the adoption of the Constitution in 1949, the first-ever parliamentary election was held in India in 1952. However, it took about two decades to reach Arunachal Pradesh. It was in 1971 the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organization) Act, of 1971, provided two seats, one in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha, for the North East Frontier Agency, to be nominated by the President of India (Bath 2009:56). However, voting right was extended only in 1977 under the Representation of People Act, of 1951 (Talukdar 1955). Since then elections have been held regularly in the State. As of now, there are 60 seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, with 2 Lok Sabha seats and 1 Rajya Sabha seat. Out of the 60 seats in the State Legislative Assembly, 59 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribe candidates and 1 seat is open to all including non-tribal candidates. The State is traditionally a Congress stronghold. However, in the 2019 assembly elections, the BJP won a thumping majority with 41 seats in a 60-seat Legislative Assembly. This paper examines and analyses the participation of Chakma in the electoral politics of the four assembly constituencies of Arunachal Pradesh, namely- 14-Doimukh, 46-Chowkham, 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General), and 50-Miao and their position as voters in these constituencies, especially in relation to the electoral outcomes.

A Brief History of Chakmas

The Chakmas are not original inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh rather they migrated from then East Pakistan in 1964 due to the submergence of agricultural and residential lands caused by the construction of a Kaptai hydroelectric dam in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) and the alleged religious persecution carried out by the Muslim majority then East Pakistani regime accompanied by physical assaults, abductions, rapes, and killings. (Singh, 2010). The construction of the dam submerged 54,000 acres of settled and cultivable land, affecting about 100,000 people, 90 per cent of whom were Chakmas (Ghosh 2016:45). The Chakmas also called Changma, Tsakma, Sagma or Sakkama are the largest groups of indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHTs) of present-day Bangladesh (Chakma 2022: 1). As per the oral history, they are believed to have first settled in the ancient kingdom of Magadha and belonged to Buddha's Sakya clan. The chronological history of the Chakmas called Chakma Bijok which is based on oral history, tells that the first Chakma king was Shakya of the Shakya clan of Magadha. Since the beginning, they have been under various Chakma kings till today. However, the nature of administration then and now has changed a lot. In fact with the signing of the 'Cotton Treaty' with the East India Company, the nature of power and administration changed in comparison to earlier days. The East India Company and later the British Indian Government also recognized their unique way of life and thus quasi-autonomy status was always maintained without interfering much with the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT). When British India was divided into two new dominions, India and Pakistan, the tribal majority area Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) went to Pakistan, much against the wish and will of the people. Since their wish was to stay with independent India and believing the 'words' of national leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, they thought the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) was part of independent India and therefore they hoisted the Indian flag in Rangamati on August 15, 1947, which was brought down Pakistan army on August 21, 1947 (Chakma 2012:27). Since then the Pakistani regime looked at them from the suspicious eye of being 'anti-Pakistan'. Fifteen years later in 1962, a developmental project was commissioned in the form of the Kaptai Hydro Project in the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT). After one year it was completed and resulted in catastrophe for the people of the tract. It submerged vast agricultural and residential lands and adequate compensation was not given to the victims which resulted in displacement of people. Left with no choice, many displaced people migrated to India via the Lushai Hills and Tripura border in 1964. Among those displaced people were Chakmas and Hajongs. Transit camps were erected across Tripura and Assam for their temporary accommodation. After consultation between the NEFA administration which was under the control of the then Governor of Assam and the Government of India, Chakmas and Hajongs were shifted to NEFA. Initially, Tirap division was chosen for their settlement by the then Governor of Assam Vishnu Sahay and the main reasons cited were available vacant land and possible ethnic clash with the Mizos, which can be seen in his letter written to then Chief Minister of Assam B.P. Chaliha on April 10, 1964, saying,

It occurs to me that we may get into trouble between the Mizos and the Chakmas in the Mizo district. These Chakmas would be quite suitable people to go into the Tirap division of NEFA where there is easily found vacant land in the area about which you and I have often spoken (White Paper 1996: 43).

Later on, two more districts, namely Lohit (present Namsai) and Subansiri (present Papumpare) were included in the five settlement schemes by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India. In total five settlement schemes were accorded for settlement of Chakma and Hajong refugees in NEFA by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India.

Presently, Hajongs inhabit the Diyun circle of Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh and Chakmas are scattered in three districts of the State, namely Changlang (Bordumsa, Diyun, and Miao), Namsai (Chowkham) and Papumpare (Hollongi and Kokila). In the Lohit district, they inhabit three villages that come under the Chowkham circle, namely Chakma Basti-I, II, and III. In the Papumpare district, they are found in the Hollongi and Kokila areas that come under the Balijan Circle. They are settled in eight blocks in number. The bulk of the Chakma population settles in the Changlang district.

Citizenship Status of Chakmas

Citizenship can simply be understood as a legal recognition of belongings accorded by the State to a person along with certain legal rights and duties. It is through citizenship an individual gets a membership in a national political community (Bath 2023:37). According to Ruth Lister 'Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community and all who possess the status are equal concerning the rights and duties with which the status is endowed' (Lister 1997:14). Like law of any other country, the Constitution of India provides for provision for granting citizenship under Articles 5, 6, 7 and 8. Also under Article 11, the Parliament has the authority to legislate for acquisition and termination of citizenship. To go along with these Constitutional provisions, The Citizenship Act, 1955, provides for acquiring citizenship in different ways such as by birth, descent, registration, naturalisation and incorporation of territory.

Talking about the citizenship status of Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh, they have not been conferred citizenship even though they have been in the State for nearly six decades since they migrated to India. The question is under which Article(s) of the Indian Constitution and provisions The Citizenship Act, 1955, as amended six times with the latest in 2019, the Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh are seeking citizenship? The question of whether they are citizens of this country or not, for the first time reached the court in 1992 in a Khudiram Chakma vs. Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh, in which Khudiram Chakma, petitioner, stated that they (petitioner and 56 other Chakma families) to Assam in 1964 and the Government allowed them to stay in the State, they must be deemed to be citizens of India within the meaning of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, as amended in 1985 (Khudiram Chakma vs. Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh, 1992). The bench of justices U. Bhat and Justice D. Baruah, Gauhati High Court, delivering judgment stated that under Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, the petitioner and 56 Chakma families did not qualify to be called Indian citizens and thus are foreigners. Unhappy over the Gauhati High Court judgment, Khudiram Chakma filed a civil petition in the Supreme Court. To counter this petition, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh also filed a counter-petition in the Supreme Court. The Court dismissed the civil petition of Khudiram Chakma arising out of SLP(C) No. 13767 of 1992 and the civil petition arising out of SLP(C) No. 12429 of 1992 filed by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh was allowed. In the wake of the anti-foreigner movement, especially anti-refugees and an ultimatum to quit/leave the State by September 30, 1994, by the AAPSU, the NHRC filed a petition in the Supreme Court (National Human Rights Commission Vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh and Another, 1996) seeking protection of life and liberty of Chakmas and Hajongs and not to evict them forcefully and illegally. In this case, the petitioner drew the attention of the court towards the intention of the Government of India to grant citizenship to these Chakmas and Hajongs as per Section 5 (1) (a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. The Supreme Court directed the State Government to protect the life and liberty of Chakmas and Hajongs and not to evict them illegally and also directed that the citizenship applications received by the Deputy Commissioner or Collector be forwarded to the Government of India for further consideration. In 2000, the People's Union for Civil Liberties and CCRCAP filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court seeking the enrolment of Chakmas and Hajongs in the electoral roll under Section 3(1) (a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. They prayed that Chakmas and Hajongs who were born in India between 1964 and 1.7.1978 are citizens of India under this section. The court delivered its judgment in favour of the petitioners stating if required materials/documents are produced, they should be included in the electoral roll which paved the way for the enrolment of Chakmas and Hajongs as voters in 2003. In 2007, the Committee for Citizenship Rights of Chakma of Arunachal Pradesh filed a civil writ petition in the Supreme Court under the title Committee for C.R. of C.A.P. and Ors. vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh and Ors. The petitioners under Article 32 of the Constitution, seek the direction of the court to the Government of India, for granting citizenship to Chakmas and Hajongs were settled in Arunachal Pradesh between 1964 and 1969. The Supreme Court after considering the previous judgments on the issue and the recommendations

of the 105th Rajya Sabha Committee, 1997, delivered its judgment on September 17, 2015, in which it directed the Government of India and the State of Arunachal Pradesh to finalize the conferment of citizenship rights on eligible Chakmas and Hajongs within three months. It is imperative to mention that a total of 4637 citizenship applications were received by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, which were returned by the said Ministry to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for two reasons: - a) the applications were not made to the appropriate authority in the prescribed form, and b) the recommendations of the State Government, as per the requirement, did not accompany the applications (Bath 2023:175). After due process, the State Government reported back 4213 applications to the Supreme Court (Ibid: 176). Out of these applications, 1945 applications are under process with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, but yet to grant single citizenship to date (Foreigners Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2023).

Court's Intervention

For the first time since the settlement of Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh, the question of whether they being citizens of India or not, reached the court in 1992 when one Khudiram Chakma, a resident of Abhaypur block under Diyun circle, filed a writ petition before the Gauhati High Court. The petition was filed against the order issued by Circle Officer, Diyun, directing the petitioner and 56 other Chakma families to vacate the plot of land they were residing in. The question was whether they were citizens of India or not under Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and whether they could claim their settlement land or not. In this case, the court ruled in favour of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and observed that the petitioner and 56 other Chakma families had no right to claim over land as their permanent abode and that the State Government had the right to issue an eviction order for they were not a native of the State. When the anti-foreigners or to say anti-outsiders movements of the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) were at their peak, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) under Article 32 of the Constitution on behalf of the Chakma and Hajong (refugees). The NHRC seek enforcement of Article 21 of the Constitution citing the alleged persecutions of Chakmas and Hajongs by some sections of people of Arunachal Pradesh. The petition pleaded that the Chakmas in India cannot be denied their basic right to existence or be subject to such treatment by the State Government which is not in accordance with law and Article 21 of the Constitution of India cannot, in particular, be subjected to such hostile treatment by a 'private body' such as the AAPSU (Singh 2010: 99). The Supreme Court passing its interim order in this case (National Human Rights Commission Vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh and Another) directed the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to safeguard the life and liberty of Chakmas and Hajongs, not to evict them from their homes and to protect them from any attempt of forceful eviction by groups such as the AAPSU. The court also directed the State Government to forward the pending citizenship applications to the Government of India. As stated previously, in 2004, the Delhi High Court assumed them (Chakmas and Hajongs) as citizens under Section 3(1) (a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, it directed the Governments and the Election Commission of India to enrol the Chakma and Hajong voters based on the production of valid documents. The landmark judgment for Chakmas and Hajongs in the course of a long legal battle came in 2015 in a Committee for C.R. of C.A.A.P. and Ors. Vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh and Ors. case when the Supreme Court directed the Government of India and the State of Arunachal Pradesh to confer citizenship rights on eligible Chakmas and Hajongs applicants within three months. Thus, the court's interventions have proved as a protector of the life and liberty of Chakmas and Hajongs in dire circumstances as well as a hope of getting citizenship in days to come.

Enrollment in Electoral Roll

As per Article 326 of the Constitution, a person is entitled to register as a voter if he/she is a citizen of India and is not less than eighteen years of age. In tune with this Constitutional provision, section 16 (1) (a) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, provides that a person shall be disqualified for registration in an electoral roll if he is not a citizen of India (The Representation of the People Act, 1950). Thus, it is clear that to be a voter one must be a citizen of India. However, in the case of Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh, things are not that simple and straight. On one hand, the court has already directed the governments to confer citizenship on eligible applicants but on the other hand, no single citizenship has been conferred to date yet they have been enrolled in the electoral roll since 2003-04. For the first time, the matter of their enrollment in the electoral roll reached the court when a civil writ petition was filed before the Delhi High Court by the People's Union for Civil Liberties and CCRCHAP against the Election Commission of India (ECI), State Election Commission of Arunachal Pradesh and Union of India in February 2000. The petitioners stated that Chakmas and Hajongs who were born in India between 1964 and 1.7.1978 are citizens of India under Section 3(1) (a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and therefore their names should be included in the electoral roll. The Court disposed of the case by stating that if materials are produced for inclusion in the electoral roll, the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the State Election Commission shall

consider inclusion within a reasonable time. However, despite this judgment, there was no inclusion of eligible Chakmas and Hajongs in the electoral roll. Therefore, in 2003, the CCRCHAP submitted a representation to the Election Commission of India (ECI) complaining about the non-inclusion. The ECI then ordered an inquiry into the matter and based on the inquiry report it conducted a special revision of the electoral roll in the assembly constituencies of 14-Doimukh (ST), 46-Chowkham (ST), 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) and 50-Miao (ST) and for the first time in 2003, a total of 1,497 applicants were found eligible for inclusion into the electoral roll. Against this revision, the State Cabinet of Arunachal Pradesh passed a resolution for the non-inclusion of non-Arunachalee in the electoral roll (White Paper, 1996:17). The ECI reacted strongly by passing an order in January 2004, stating it would not carry out any election-related duty in the four assembly constituencies till the State cabinet withdrew its resolution. Later the electoral roll of the entire State was revised in which earlier accepted eligible applicants (1,497) were enrolled as per the order issued by the ECI, dated March 3, 2004, in the electoral roll which paved the way for the inclusion of more eligible Chakma and Hajong voters in the future.

Constituency-wise enrollment of Chakma-Hajong voters from 2003 onwards in four Assembly Constituencies till 2023:-

Year of Revision	Assembly Constituency	Total claim in Form 6			Final Electoral Roll
		Lodge	Admitted	Rejected	
2003	14- Doimukh	0	0	0	0
	46- Chowkham	1356	323	1033	323
	49-Bordumsa-Diyun	7189	1164	6025	1164
	50- Miao	2347	10	2337	10
	Total	10,892	1497	9395	1497

Table 1:- Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

In 2003 for the first time, Chakma-Hajong voters were enrolled in the electoral roll in the four assembly constituencies of the State. As reflected by Table 1.1, the total applications lodged were 10,892 with 49-Bordumsa-Diyun having the largest number. Of those, 1,497 applicants were enrolled in the final electoral roll which is about 13.74% of the total applications. Out of 1,497 voters, 49-Bordumsa-Diyun had the major chunk of voters with 1164 in number which is about 77.8% of the total voters admitted. 46-Chowkham had 323 voters enrolled in the final electoral roll which counts for about 21.5% of the total voters enrolled followed by the 50-Miao assembly constituency with 10 voters in total which is less than 1% of the total voters enrolled. So far as 14-Doimukh is concerned, no form was filed. In 2004 and 2005 no addition was done to the electoral roll.

Table 2:-

Year of Revision	Assembly Constituency	Total claim in Form 6			Final Electoral Roll
		Lodge	Admitted	Rejected	
2006	14- Doimukh	199	199	0	199
	46- Chowkham	286	286	0	286
	49-Bordumsa-Diyun	1115	1115	0	1115
	50- Miao	15	15	0	15
	Total	1615	1615	0	1615

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

Three years later, in 2006 second enrollment drive was done in which a mere 118 voters were added to the existing electoral roll. For the first time, 199 voters were enrolled in the 14-Doimukh assembly constituency. In the 46-Chowkham and 49-Bordumsa-Diyun assembly constituencies, there was a decline in the number of voters by 12% and 4% respectively in comparison to the 2003 final electoral roll. For 50-Miao there was an increase of just 5 voters in comparison to 2003 enrollment. In 2007, no fresh enrollment was done.

Year of Revision- 2008

Table 3:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		

14-Doimukh (ST)	199	760	15	745	15	7	1	6	1	213
46-Chowkham (ST)	286	1401	27	1374	27	289	23	266	23	290
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1115	8647	287	8360	287	1115	274	841	274	1128
50-Miao (ST)	15	3370	2	3368	2	15	1	14	1	16
Total	1615	14178	331	13847	331	1426	299	1127	299	1647

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2008, 14,178 forms were submitted under 'Form 6', out of which only 331 were admitted which is 2.33% of the total forms submitted. Again out of 331 forms 299 were deleted/objected to under 'Form 7' leaving only 32 for the final electoral roll. Thus, the addition in the final electoral roll from 2006 to 2008 was only 32 electors across the four assembly constituencies. In the same year, another revision was done and added another 18 voters. Thus, in total 50 voters were added to the existing electoral roll in 2008.

Year of Revision- 2008 Pre of PER

Table 4:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	213	106	10	96	10	0	0	0	0	223
46-Chowkham (ST)	290	231	0	231	0	2	2	0	2	228
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1128	2583	5	2578	5	0	0	0	0	1133
50-Miao (ST)	16	786	5	781	5	0	0	0	0	21
Total	1647	3706	20	3686	20	2	2	0	2	1665

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

Year of Revision- 2009

Table 5:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	223	459	8	451	8	2	2	0	2	229
46-Chowkham (ST)	288	387	8	379	8	0	0	0	0	296
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1133	6044	12	6032	12	0	0	0	0	1145
50-Miao (ST)	21	1344	2	1342	2	0	0	0	0	23

Total	1665	8234	30	8204	30	2	2	0	2	1693
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Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2009, 8,234 forms were submitted under 'Form 6'. Of those 8204 forms were rejected under the same form and only 30 were admitted. Again out of 30, another 2 were deleted which means only another 28 voters were added in 2009 making the total voters in the final electoral roll 1,693. If we look at the percentage of rejection of forms, it was 99.63% which is a huge number.

Year of Revision- 2009 Special Revision

Table 6:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected		lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	229	64	13	51	13	0	0	0	0	242
46-Chowkham (ST)	296	83	2	81	2	0	0	0	0	298
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1145	3433	10	3423	10	0	0	0	0	1155
50-Miao (ST)	23	684	4	680	4	0	0	0	0	27
Total	1693	4264	29	4235	29	0	0	0	0	1722

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

Forms lodged in the 2009 Special Revision were 4,264 of which 4,235 were rejected citing various reasons by the concerned authority. Only 29 fresh electors were added to the final electoral roll.

Year of Revision- 2010 Summary Revision

Table 7:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected		lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	242	50	36	14	36	2	2	0	2	276
46-Chowkham (ST)	298	224	13	211	13	301	13	288	13	298
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1155	4459	7	4452	7	1148	91	1057	91	1071
50-Miao (ST)	27	1352	0	1352	0	26	10	16	10	17
Total	1722	6085	56	6029	56	1477	116	1361	116	1662

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2010, 6,085 submitted the forms for enrollment and of those 6,029 were rejected citing various reasons by the concerned authority. 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) constituency has the highest number of applicants and 50-Miao (ST) has only 27 applicants. Also, 116 names were deleted owing to fewer admissions and quite a good number of deletions, and the total electors in the final electoral roll decreased by 100 electors in comparison to previous enrollment.

Year of Revision- 2011 Special Summary Revision

Table 8:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	276	69	28	41	28	0	0	0	0	304
46-Chowkham (ST)	298	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	298
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1071	815	0	815	0	0	0	0	0	1071
50-Miao (ST)	17	1323	3	1320	3	0	0	0	0	20
Total	1662	2207	31	2176	31	0	0	0	0	1693

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

Comparatively fewer forms were submitted in 2011 which was 2,207 and of those 2,176 forms which counts 98.59% of the total forms were rejected under 'Form 6' and only 31 electors were enrolled in the final electoral roll.

Year of Revision- 2012 Special Summary Revision

Table 9:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	304	0	21	0	21	0	1	0	1	325
46-Chowkham (ST)	298	530	23	507	23	0	0	0	0	321
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1071	530	11	519	11	0	0	0	0	1082
50-Miao (ST)	20	595	0	595	0	0	0	0	0	20
Total	1693	1655	55	1621	55	0	1	0	1	1747

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2012, 1,655 forms were submitted for inclusion in the electoral roll. Of those 1,621 were rejected by the concerned authority citing various and 1 was deleted. Only 54 new electors were added to the final electoral roll. The percentage of rejection was 97.94% which is as high as previous rates. The total number of voters in the final electoral was 1747.

Year of Revision- 2014 Special Summary Revision

Table 10:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected		lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	325	87	47	40	40	0	0	0	0	372
46-Chowkham (ST)	321	8	5	3	5	0	0	0	0	326

49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1082	1649	265	1384	265	0	0	0	0	1347
50-Miao (ST)	20	1093	30	1063	30	0	0	0	0	50
Total	1748	2837	347	2490	347	0	0	0	0	2095

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

The special Summary revision was done in 2014 in which 2,837 forms were lodged for enrollment. Of those 2490 forms were rejected and 347 were admitted and added to the final electoral roll. Total voters reached 2,095 this year with the highest number of voters from 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) with the strength of 1347 voters.

Year of Revision-2015

Table 11:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected		lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	372	0	90	0	90	0	0	0	0	462
46-Chowkham (ST)	326	922	80	0	80	0	0	0	0	406
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1347	590	528	62	528	0	0	0	0	1875
50-Miao (ST)	50	3059	120	2939	120	0	0	0	0	170
Total	2095	4571	818	3001	818	0	0	0	0	2913

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

In 2015, 4,571 forms were submitted for enrollment. But out of the total forms submitted, 3,001 were rejected which counts 65.65% which is much less than the previous rejection. Before that rejection rates were above 85% of the total forms submitted. It means 818 fresh electors were added to the final electoral roll taking the total voter strength to 2,913.

Year of Revision-2016

Table 12:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected		lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	462	366	53	313	53	3	3	0	0	512
46-Chowkham (ST)	406	912	48	864	48	0	0	0	0	454
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	1875	1634	209	1425	209	4	4	0	0	2080
50-Miao (ST)	170	3170	77	3093	77	0	0	0	0	247
Total	2913	6082	387	5695	387	7	7	0	0	3293

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

In 2016, 6,082 forms were submitted and of those 5,695 forms were rejected citing various grounds by the concerned authority. The rejection rate was as high as 93.63%. It means 387 forms were admitted but 7 were also deleted. In a nutshell, 380 fresh electors were added to the final electoral roll taking the total strength to 3293 voters.

Year of Revision-2017

Table 13:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclusion under Rule 21	Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected			lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	512	65	65	0	0	65	0	0	0	0	577
46-Chowkham (ST)	454	445	43	402	43	43	1	1	0	1	496
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	2080	7486	613	6972	0	613	0	0	0	0	2693
50-Miao (ST)	247	2322	245	2077	0	245	0	0	0	0	492
Total	3293	10309	966	9451	43	858	1	1		1	4258

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2017, 10,309 forms were submitted and out of this 9,451 were rejected which is 91.67% of the total forms submitted. This year 966 fresh electors were added to the final electoral roll which was the highest till that year. The total Chakma-Hajong voter strength reached 4,258.

Year of Revision-2018

Table 14:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclusion under Rule 21	Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodged	admitted	rejected			lodged	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	577	129	82	47	0	82	22	10	12	10	649
46-Chowkham (ST)	496	474	22	452	22	22	7	7	0	7	511
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	2693	7347	341	7006	0	341	2	2	0	2	3032
50-Miao (ST)	492	2843	92	2751	0	92	0	0	0	0	584
Total	4258	10793	537	10256	22	537	31	19	12	19	4776

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2018, 10,793 forms were submitted but again 95.02% of the forms were rejected. Only 537 were admitted under 'Form 6'. There were 19 deletions as well which means a total of 518 fresh electors were added to the final electoral roll taking the total Chakma-Hajong voters to 4,775 spread across four assembly constituencies of the State.

Year of Revision-2019

Table 15:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6	Inclusion	Total	Objection in Form 7	Total delet	Final electoral
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	ral roll	lodge	admitt ed	rejecte d	under Rule 21	admi t ted	lod ge	admi tted	rejec ted	ion	roll
14-Doimukh (ST)	649	185	17	168	0	17	4	0	4	0	666
46-Chowkham (ST)	511	181	23	158	23	23	0	0	0	0	534
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	3032	5791	294	5497	0	294	0	0	0	0	3326
50-Miao (ST)	584	1511	95	1416	0	95	0	0	0	0	679
Total	4776	7668	429	7239	23	429	4	0	4	0	5205

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar

In 2019, 7,668 forms were submitted of which 7,239 were rejected which is 94.40% of the total forms submitted and only 429 enrolled. By this time 14- Doimukh had 666, 46-Showkham 534, 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) whopping 3,326, and 50-Miao had 679 voters. For the first time, the total number of Chakma-Hajong electors crossed the landmark of 5,000 in the electoral roll.

Year of Revision-2020

Table 16:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electo ral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclus ion under Rule 21	Tota l admi t ted	Objection in Form 7			Total deleti on	Final electora l roll
		lodge	admitt ed	rejecte d			lod ge	admi tted	rejec ted		
14-Doimukh (ST)	666	86	32	54	0	32	0	0	0	0	698
46-Chowkham (ST)	534	610	34	576	34	34	1	1	0	1	567
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	3326	5244	242	5002	0	242	62	62	0	62	3506
50-Miao (ST)	679	928	127	801	0	127	3	3	0	3	803
Total	5204	6868	435	6433	34	435	66	66	0	66	5574

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

In 2020, 6,868 forms were submitted but the rejection out of the total forms submitted was 6,433 which was 93.66%. There were 66 deletions as well which means 369 fresh electors were enrolled in the final electoral roll. The total Chakma-Hajong voter strength reached 5,573 this year.

Year of Revision-2021

Table 17:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electo ral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclus ion under Rule 21	Tota l admi t ted	Objection in Form 7			Total deleti on	Final electora l roll
		lodge	admitt ed	rejecte d			lod ge	admi tted	rejec ted		
14-Doimukh (ST)	698	164	10	154	0	10	3	3	0	3	705
46-Chowkham (ST)	567	73	11	62	11	11	1	1	0	1	578

49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	3506	3184	376	2808	0	376	0	0	0	0	3882
50-Miao (ST)	803	981	58	925	0	58	1	1	0	1	860
Total	5574	4402	455	3949	11	455	5	5	0	5	6025

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

The number of forms submitted for enrollment in 2021 was 4,402 of which 3,949 were rejected. It means 455 forms were admitted under 'Form 6' but 5 names were also deleted making the fresh electors enrolled to 450. The total strength of Chakma-Hajong voters reached 6,024 with 3,882 in the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) constituency.

Year of Revision-2022

Table 18:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclusion under Rule 21	Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected			lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	705	145	73	72	0	73	0	0	0	0	778
46-Chowkham (ST)	578	616	18	598	18	18	0	0	0	0	596
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	3882	5011	496	4515	0	496	6	6	0	6	4372
50-Miao (ST)	860	1372	115	1257	0	115	4	4	0	4	971
Total	6025	7144	702	6442	18	702	10	10	0	10	6717

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

In 2022, as many as 7,144 forms were submitted but the rejection out of the total forms submitted was 6,442 which was 90.17%. There were 10 deletions as well which means 692 fresh electors were enrolled in the final electoral roll. The total Chakma-Hajong voter strength reached 6,717 this year.

Year of Revision-2023

Table 19:-

Assembly Constituency	Draft electoral roll	Total claim in Form 6			Inclusion under Rule 21	Total admitted	Objection in Form 7			Total deletion	Final electoral roll
		lodge	admitted	rejected			lodge	admitted	rejected		
14-Doimukh (ST)	778	231	128	103	0	128	0	0	0	0	906
46-Chowkham (ST)	596	27	8	18	0	8	1	1	0	1	603
49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	4372	4153	752	3547	0	752	7	7	0	7	5117
50-Miao (ST)	971	1161	118	1043	0	118	5	5	0	5	1084
Total	6717	5572	1006	4711	0	1006	13	13	0	13	7710

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar.

The number of forms submitted for enrollment in 2023 was 5,572 of which 4711 were rejected which was 84.55% of the total forms submitted. There were 13 deletions as well. In this way, the total strength of Chakma and Hajong voters reached 7,710 with 5,117 voters in the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) constituency alone.

Starting from 2003 till 2023, as many as 1, 19,082 forms were submitted and of these 7,710 voters were enrolled and of those 7,152 are Chakma and 558 are Hajong. It means the percentage of total Chakma voters enrolled till 2023 out of the total forms submitted is 6.00% only.

Implications of Chakma Voters

As per the electoral record available with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer published on January 5, 2023, since 2003 till 2023 as many as 119082 forms have been submitted for enrollment by the Chakma and Hajong applicants of which 7710 have been enrolled in the electoral roll. Most of the applicants get rejected owing to various reasons such as lack of adequate supporting documents, absence on the day of the hearing etc. Out of 7710 voters, 558 are Hajongs which means the total Chakma voters in the State is 7152 of which 63.74% (4559) are concentrated in 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) followed by 1084 voters in 50-Miao (ST), 906 voters in 14-Doimukh (ST) and 603 voters in 46-Chowkham (ST).

Table 20:-

Sl.No.	Name of the Constituency	No. of Chakma voters	% of Chakma voters of total Chakma voters in the State
1	14-Doimukh (ST)	906	12.67
2	46-Chowkham (ST)	603	8.43
3	49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	4559	63.74
4	50-Miao (ST)	1084	15.16
	Total	7152	100.00

Source: Chief Electoral Officer.Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar, 2023.

Graphical Representation of Table 20

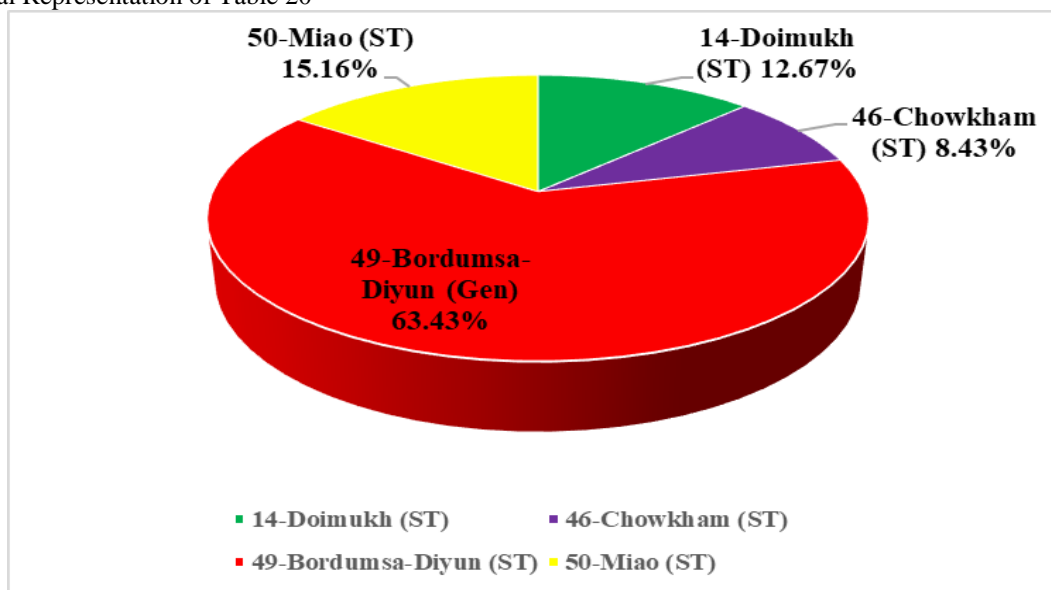


Figure 1

Source: Chief Electoral Officer.Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar, 2023.

Table 21:-

Sl.No.	Name of the Constituency	Total voters of the respective Constituency	% of Chakma voters in respective Constituency
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1	14-Doimukh (ST)	22862	3.96
2	46-Chowkham (ST)	14020	4.30
3	49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen)	20687	22.03
4	50-Miao (ST)	20948	5.17

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar, 2023.

Graphical Representation of Table 21

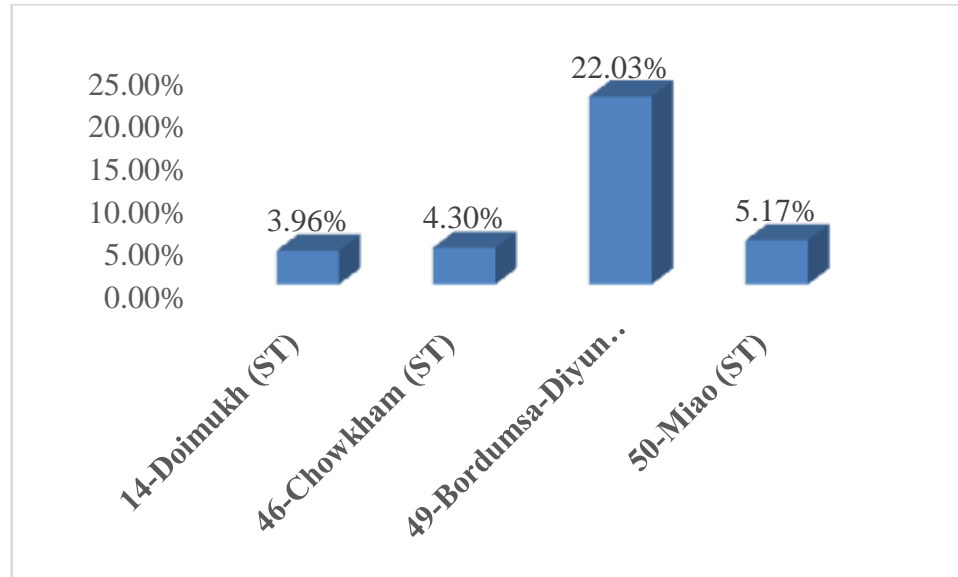


Figure 2

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar, 2023.

The above table shows that in three assembly constituencies, Chakma voters constitute near about 5% or less, however, one constituency has 22.03% which is a huge number considering the nature of the population composition of the constituency. The 14-Doimukh (ST) has a total of 22,862 voters spread across forty-two polling stations. If we look at the strength of Chakma voters in this constituency, there are only 906 voters which is 3.96% of the total votes of the constituency. It means Chakma votes are not a determinant factor in deciding the electoral outcome in this particular constituency. Majority of the voters (21,956) which constitute about 96.03% comprised of Nyishi, Adi, Galo, Mishng, Assamese, Bengali, Bihari, etc. Again the largest chunk of voters is undeniably Nyishi. The total strength of 46-Chowkham (ST) in terms of voters is 14,020 spread across thirty-four polling stations. Now the majority of the voters are Khampti along with some Adivasi, Bihari, Bengali, Nepali, etc. Chakma voters account for only 603 which is 4.30% of the total votes. Since their number is a mere 4.30%, there is hardly any influence on the electoral outcome of the constituency. It is the Khampti votes that determine the election result. The 49-Bordumsa-Diyun is the only unreserved constituency for the Scheduled Tribe candidates out of 60 assembly constituencies of the State. It is open to all categories of candidates be it scheduled tribe candidates or non-scheduled tribe candidates. It has been categorized as a 'General' constituency. It is inhabited by various scheduled tribes such as Singpho, Khampti, Tangsa, and Nocte, and many non-scheduled tribes such as Adivasi (tea garden workers), Assamese, Bodo, Chakma, Hajong, Deori, Sonowal Kachari, Bihari, Nepali, etc. As per the final electoral roll of 2023, the constituency has 20,687 voters spread across 40 polling stations.

So far as the 50-Miao (ST) assembly constituency is concerned, a large chunk of voters in this constituency is the Tangsa. The constituency has as many as 20,948 voters spread across thirty-six polling stations. Chakma voters made up only 1084 which accounts for 5.17% of the total voters. Now in a constituency where 94.83% of the voters are non-Chakma of which again the majority is Tangsa, there is hardly any influence in the electoral outcome by the Chakma votes. The contesting candidates hardly visit any of the Chakma-inhabited villages of the constituency even during the election campaign. Thus, Chakma voters are not of top priority for the contesting as well as winning candidates giving their 'less' number in terms of votes.

Thus, from the impact or implication point of view, Chakma voters hardly dictate or influence the electoral results in 14-Doimukh (ST), 46-Chowkham (ST) and 50-Miao (ST) because of their numbers. However, the same cannot be said for the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (Gen) constituency considering the nature of the population composition of the constituency. If we break the voters on the community line, the picture would look like given below table-

Table 22:-

Sl.No	Tribe/Community	Number of Voters	% of Voters of the Constituency
1	Tea Garden Workers	4691	22.68
2	Chakma	4559	22.03
3	Singpho	2507	12.12
4	Tangsa	1502	7.26
5	Deori	1157	5.59
6	Khampti	1065	5.15
7	Others	5206	25.17
	Total	20687	100.00

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Nirvachan Bhawan, Itanagar, 2023.

The table clearly shows that the Chakmas constitute the second-highest vote bank (4559) after the Tea Garden Workers (4691). The third highest voters are the Singphos with 2507 voters which is 12.12% of the constituency. The gap between the first and second highest voters is 0.65% or say 132 voters, however, the gap between the second and third highest is quite big with a margin of 9.91% or 2052 voters. There is also every possibility that Chakmas would overtake the Tea Garden Workers to be the community with the highest number of voters shortly given the fact that every year a good number of applicants from the Chakma community submit their application for enrolment in the electoral roll. It is also imperative to mention that the total strength of Chakma (including Hajong) voters in comparison to the total number of applications submitted from 2003 to 2023 is only 6.00% (7710 Chakma & Hajong voters of the total 119082 applications submitted). Now imagine a situation where all the applications are accepted and enrolled in the electoral roll. In that case, Chakmas would become a community with the highest voters, especially in the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) assembly constituency. The indigenous voters would be reduced to a minority and they would become the dominant political force in the constituency. They would also have quite a good number in the 50-Miao (ST) and 46-Chowkham (ST) assembly constituencies. They would also become a dominant force in the entire Arunachal East parliamentary constituency with near about 100000 voters. As per the latest electoral roll (2023), there are 343610 voters in the Arunachal East parliamentary constituency spreading across twenty-seven assembly constituencies. If all the applicants are enrolled with about 100000 voters, the fate of the electoral outcomes of the constituency would be largely influenced and determined by Chakma voters which in turn means a more dominant voice in the political circle of the State. Also if Chakmas are allowed to contest the election, their chance of winning the election cannot be ruled out, especially in the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) assembly constituency. It is needless to say that in a constituency with so many tribes/communities, if a Chakma candidate contests an election, most probably Chakma voters, mostly if not all, would vote for a fellow candidate considering their long plight of alienation and discrimination from the system and perhaps will also win especially assembly election.

Conclusion:-

The available data (electoral roll, 2023) suggest that in at least one assembly constituency (49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) of the four where Chakmas are found, there are quite a sizeable number of Chakma voters and thus influence the electoral outcome. They constitute the second highest in that particular constituency in terms of number with very little difference from the community with the highest number of voters. Interestingly both communities with the highest and second highest voters are non-native or to say 'outsiders'. In this constituency, the difference in number of voters between the Chakmas and Indigenous tribe (Singpho) with the highest voters is 2052 votes, which is a big margin in a constituency with so many communities and tribes. It is also found that starting from 2003 to 2023, 119082 application forms were submitted by Chakma and Hajong applicants (mostly Chakmas) for enrollment into the electoral roll. Had all the applicants been enrolled, not only the 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) assembly constituency would have seen a huge number of Chakma voters, but also another two assembly constituencies, namely 16-Chowkham (ST) and 50-Miao (ST). The impact would not only be confined to the

assembly constituencies but would also have been seen in the Arunachal East parliamentary constituency which has only 343610 voters spreading across the twenty-seven assembly constituencies. If citizenship is granted to all Chakmas and Hajongs, without differentiating those who migrated and those who were born in India, all applicants would be eligible to be enrolled in the electoral roll as they will have all the supporting documents for the enrollment. In that case, the Chakmas would constitute a huge number of voters and would engulf the Indigenous voters, especially in 49-Bordumsa-Diyun (General) and would also influence 16-Chowkham (ST) and 50-Miao (ST) assembly constituencies. As already mentioned, they would also constitute a dominant political force in one of the two parliamentary constituencies.

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