



Assembly Election 2026 in Assam: A Study of Electoral Trends And Voter Behaviour in Katigorah Legislative Assembly Constituency in Cachar District

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Abstract: This paper looks at Katigorah Legislative Assembly Constituency (No. 116) in the Assam Assembly Election 2026. Katigorah is the largest constituency in Cachar district with 2,14,527 electors and it is also known as a swing seat. No party has been able to retain this seat since 2011. The 2026 election was historic because the winning margin crossed 37,000 votes for the first time and the vote share of the winner touched 58.21%. The study is based on Election Commission of India data 2026, Final Delimitation Order 2023, The Assam Tribune constituency scan report dated 7th April 2026, and informal interaction with voters in Kalain, Gumra and Katigorah area in May 2026. The paper argues that Katigorah 2026 shows a shift from identity-based voting to candidate centric and development-oriented voting. The issues of defection, delimitation and revival of Panchgram Paper Mill played a decisive role.

Keywords: Katigorah, Assam Election 2026, Voter Behaviour, Cachar, Delimitation, Barak Valley.

1. Introduction: Assam Assembly Election 2026 was held for the 16th Legislative Assembly in two phases in April 2026 and result was declared on 4th May 2026. In Barak Valley, the election was very competitive. Among the seven seats of Cachar district, Katigorah was the most watched contest.

Katigorah was established in 1951. It is part of Silchar Lok Sabha constituency. Since beginning, this seat has seen representation from Congress, BJP, AIUDF and Independents. Congress has won seven times, BJP five times and AIUDF two times. But after 2016, Katigorah has become highly volatile. Voters change their choice every election.

In 2026, the contest became unique. BJP fielded Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha who was sitting Congress MLA from North Karimganj. He resigned from Congress and joined BJP in March 2026. Congress fielded Amar Chand Jain who was BJP MLA from Katigorah in 2016. So both parties exchanged their faces. This raised a very important research question - do people of Katigorah vote for party or for the individual candidate?

This paper tries to answer this.

2. Objectives: The paper has four objectives:

- To trace the electoral history and trend of Katigorah from 1951 to 2026.
- To present the final and authentic result of 2026 with ECI figures.

- c) To examine the voter behaviour in 2026 election based on field reality.
- d) To assess the impact of delimitation 2023 and defection politics on the result.

3. Methodology: For the convenience of the study, descriptive-analytical method has been used rather than complex statistical model.

For **secondary data**, I have used ECI Statistical Report 2026, Final Delimitation Order for Assam 2023 published by Election Commission, District Census Handbook of Cachar 2011, and news reports. The most useful newspaper report was The Assam Tribune, 7th April 2026 - "Constituency scan: Defections, new voters recast Katigora battle in Barak Valley" which gave booth wise insight.

For **primary data**, I did informal field interaction in first week of May 2026 just after result declaration. I talked to about 40 voters in Kalain Bazar, Gumra, Katigora and Salchapra area. I tried to include different communities - Bengali Hindu, Bengali Muslim, tea garden workers and Hindi speaking people from Panchgram. The interaction was not a structured questionnaire but an open discussion about what influenced their vote. This gave me a ground level understanding which is not available in ECI data.

4. Profile of Katigora After Delimitation 2023: Before delimitation, Katigora was a rural constituency with strong presence of minority voters in Kalain and Katigora blocks. After delimitation of 2023, its composition has changed completely. Now it includes:

1. Badarpur Municipal Board
2. Part of Borkhola Development Block - Chandranathpur, Borkhola, Jarailtola, Sonapur Gram Panchayats.
3. Part of Kalain Development Block.
4. Part of Katigora Development Block.
5. Part of Salchapra Development Block - Salchapra GP.
6. Part of Algapur Block including Panchgram and Panchgram Township (Paper Mill Township)

Due to this, total electors have gone up to 2,14,527, which is the highest in Cachar. There are more than 6,200 first time voters who were added in January 2026 revision.

Socially, Katigora is a mini Barak Valley. Bengali Muslims are about 48%, Bengali Hindus about 45%, and remaining 7% are Tea Tribes, Manipuri Meitei, Dimasa and Hindi speaking people living in Panchgram industrial area. Language identity is very strong here. People speak Bengali, but they are divided by religion during elections traditionally. However, in 2026, this division seemed less sharp.

The inclusion of Panchgram Township is the most important change. Panchgram had Cachar Paper Mill, which has been closed for many years. Thousands of families are suffering. Revival of the mill was the number one election demand in that area. Similarly, flood and erosion problem of Barak river in Gumra and Katigora, and poor condition of Kalain-Katigora road were local issues.

5. Electoral Trends: 1951 to 2026: If we look at the MLA list from 1951 to 2026, three phases are clear.

Phase-I 1951 to 1985: (Congress Phase) In this period Congress was dominant. Hem Chandra Chakravarty won in 1957, Tarapada Bhattacharjee won as Independent in 1962 and later as Congress in 1972, Abdul Hamid Mazumder won in 1972 and 1985. It was a stable phase.

Phase-II 1991 to 2011: BJP Entry and AIUDF Rise: BJP first won Katigorah in 1991 and then Kali Ranjan Deb won in 2001. This was the time when BJP started gaining base in Barak Valley. AIUDF also emerged as a force after 2006. In 2011, AIUDF candidate Aatur Rahman Mazarbhuiya won with 33,226 votes defeating INC. This showed Muslim voters shifting from Congress to AIUDF.

Phase-III 2016 to 2026: High Volatility and Swing Nature: Since 2016, no party could retain Katigorah.

In 2016, Amar Chand Jain of BJP won defeating Khalil Uddin Mazumder of AIUDF by 8,808 votes.

In 2021, Khalil Uddin Mazumder of Congress won defeating Gautam Roy of BJP by 6,939 votes. He secured 83,268 votes which was 51% vote share.

In 2026, Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha of BJP won defeating Amar Chand Jain of Congress by 37,680 votes.

So every five years, the seat is changing hands. This confirms that voters of Katigorah are rational and they evaluate performance. Party loyalty is weak.

6. The 2026 Election Result: Detailed Numbers: The result of 2026 was declared on 4th May. As per ECI Live Result archived by Oneindia and Wikipedia, the final figures for Katigorah are:

BJP - Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha - 1,10,758 votes - 58.21% - Winner

INC - Amar Chand Jain - 73,078 votes - 38.41% - Runner up

AITC - Md. Fazlur Rahman Laskar - 1,989 votes - 1.05%

NOTA - 1,194 votes - 0.63%

Total polled - 1,90,257

Turnout - 88.69%

Margin - 37,680 votes (19.80%)

There are three records in this result.

First, 58.21% vote share is the highest ever in Katigorah since 1951. Earlier highest was 51% in 2021.

Second, margin of 37,680 votes is the highest ever. In 2021 margin was only 6,939, in 2016 it was 8,808. So 2026 margin is almost five times.

Third, turnout of 88.69% is also very high. It is 2.68% higher than 2021 and higher than state average of around 82%. As per Assam Tribune report, women voters participation was more than men in many booths of Kalain and Salchapra.

Another interesting point is the failure of third force. Trinamool Congress tried hard in Barak Valley but got only 1.05% in Katigorah. NOTA also got only 0.63%. This shows people voted very strategically. They did not want to split votes.

7. Analyzing Voter Behaviour in 2026: Four Factors:

Based on my field interaction in Kalain and Gumra, I found four reasons behind this big mandate.

First, Candidate Centric Voting: People voted for the person, not only for party. Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha is very popular among youth. He is known for raising issues of Barak Valley in Assembly and for being accessible. Many voters told me they have seen his work in neighbouring Karimganj. One Muslim

auto driver in Gumra told me, "We voted for Kamalakhya da, party does not matter". This is important because both main candidates were Hindu in a Muslim majority constituency, still BJP won with Muslim votes also. This indicates that credibility of candidate mattered more than religious identity.

Second, Reward of Defection: Generally political science says defection is punished by voters. But in Katigora 2026, defection was rewarded. Kamalakhya left Congress and joined BJP, but his personal votes increased from around 45,000 in North Karimganj in 2021 to 1,10,758 in Katigora in 2026. People did not see it as betrayal but as a political decision for development. One shopkeeper in Kalain Bazar told me "If he gets ticket from BJP and becomes minister, our area will benefit". So, voters are practical.

Third, Shift from Identity to Development: In 2019 and 2021, the main issues were CAA, NRC, D-Voter. In 2026, issues were different. In Panchgram, the issue was revival of paper mill. In Jalalpur and Katigora (Border areas), it was flood and erosion. In Kalain, it was bad road condition and unemployment. Out of 40 voters I talked to, 25 said development, road, job and paper mill were main issues. Only 8 persons said religion or CAA-NRC was main issue. This is a clear transition. Even 6,200 first time voters talked more about jobs than about identity.

Fourth, Impact of Delimitation: Delimitation added nearly 40,000 new voters from Badarpur and Panchgram industrial areas. These areas have many Hindi speaking and tea tribe voters who traditionally lean towards BJP. This changed the electoral arithmetic. Earlier, Kalain and Katigora rural minority belt was decisive. Now with addition of Badarpur and Panchgram, the balance has tilted towards BJP. So delimitation was a structural factor which helped BJP to get this huge margin.

8. Conclusion: The 2026 election in Katigora gives us some important conclusions.

Firstly, Katigora has confirmed its character as a swing and high turnout seat. Voters are politically aware and they do not hesitate to change their choice. No MLA has been re-elected since 2011.

Secondly, 2026 shows emergence of rational and strategic voting. People voted for candidate who they think can deliver development. They also avoided wasting votes on third parties like AITC.

Thirdly, delimitation 2023 has played a crucial role. Inclusion of Panchgram and Badarpur has made Katigora more industrial in character and has introduced new issues like revival of paper mill.

Fourthly, the high turnout of 88.69% and high women participation indicates deepening of democracy in Barak Valley.

For future research, booth level analysis is needed. How did Panchgram industrial area vote compared to Kalain rural area? What was the voting pattern of women? What was the role of social media among first time voters? These questions need separate study.

Overall, Katigora 2026 has set a new benchmark - 58.21% vote share and 37,680 margin. Whether BJP can retain it in 2031 or the swing nature will continue, only time will tell. But one thing is clear, voters of Katigora are now looking for development, not only identity.

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