

# The Role of Media in the Success of the Voice of the People Party

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**Abstract:** *The article examines how media, across historical and contemporary contexts, has shaped political awareness and mobilisation in Meghalaya. It outlines the crucial role played by newspapers, journals, songs, and local publications during the Hill State Movement, highlighting how these mediums helped cultivate political consciousness and unify communities. The discussion then shifts to modern communication practices, where digital platforms, social media, and podcasts have become central channels for political outreach, especially among younger voters. The emergence of the Voice of the People Party provides a recent example of how targeted online strategies, accessible digital content, and culturally relevant media, including political anthems, have strengthened voter engagement and expanded a party's influence. Overall, the narrative illustrates how media continues to influence democratic processes and shape political participation in Meghalaya.*

**Keywords:** Media influence, Meghalaya politics, social media outreach, Hill State Movement, political communication.

## Role of Media

The media plays a vital role in influencing the political landscape and electoral process of a democracy. In Meghalaya, the press had played a very important role during the Hill State Movement especially in creating awareness on the movement. There were a number of newspapers, journals and books that were published during the movement such as “Ka Jingrwai India<sup>1</sup>”, “Ka Jingtnei Ka District Council<sup>2</sup>”, “Ka jingpyrta u khun ka Ri<sup>3</sup>” and “Ka plan ba la tyrwa<sup>4</sup>”. The newspapers that were brought out include “U Pyrman<sup>5</sup>”, “Ka Pyrta u Riewlum<sup>6</sup>”, “Ka Rilum mihngi<sup>7</sup>”, “Jowai Mail”, “U Nongsain Hima<sup>8</sup>” and “U Hynniew Trep<sup>9</sup>”. The “Hill Chronicle” was an English weekly that circulated during the movement which voiced the sentiments of the people for a hill state. Garo Hills as well had a number of newspapers, journals and magazines that were published such as the “Achik Songbad<sup>10</sup>” and “Pring prang<sup>11</sup>” which was a political weekly newspaper. Journals such as the “Kubarangba<sup>12</sup>” and “A’Sangni Songbad<sup>13</sup>” was also published.

Patriotic songs were also composed during the movement which inspired people to fight for a separate hill state and for their rights. “Ri Khasi Ri jong nga<sup>14</sup>”, “Ka Dak Ka jingjop<sup>15</sup>”, “u Khyndriam, u Pnar, u Bhoi, u War<sup>16</sup>”, “Ki Samla Rilum<sup>17</sup>” etc were some of the songs that were composed by various professional writers, singers and musicians. Throughout the movement, these songs were sung at meetings for the movement's propagation, hartals, processions, and other events, such as Indira Gandhi's visit to Shillong.

In the past, direct communication between candidates and voters was a major component of political campaigns. Candidates would address the issues and the necessary

actions to address them. In order to inform the public about the election and the candidates' plans in the event that they are elected, they also dispatched political agents to every home.

In contemporary times, media still plays a very important role. In “A Study of the Relationship Between Social Conflict and Media In Meghalaya” (2023), Deepak Singh and Dr Barath N states that “Media in Meghalaya has often acted as a platform for dialogue and discussion. By providing a space for various stakeholders to voice their opinions, it has facilitated conversations between tribal leaders, politicians, activists, and the general populace. The media's role as a mediator, albeit an indirect one, can foster understanding and potentially reduce conflicts. The media's portrayal of tribal politics can both illuminate and complicate social dynamics. By highlighting the role of traditional institutions like the Dorbar Shnong<sup>18</sup> and Nokma<sup>19</sup>, media can educate the public about the unique governance structures within Meghalaya.”

Politicians connect with the public and spread their messages through the media. Every political party has a media unit that investigates issues and uses technology to communicate with members of each constituency. These messages were previously disseminated by newspapers, politicians participating in campaigns and rallies, handing out pamphlets, and using radio to connect with the rural populace. Songs were frequently used to engage the public at these rallies. Newspapers like “The Shillong Times”, “Mapwhor<sup>20</sup>”, “The Meghalaya Guardian”, “Highland Post” and “Meghalaya Times” are used for raising public awareness of politics in addition to providing news and information.

<sup>1</sup> Ka Jingrwai India- The song of India

<sup>2</sup> Ka Jingtnei Ka District Council- The working of the District Council

<sup>3</sup> Ka jingpyrta u khun ka Ri- The call of the son of the soil

<sup>4</sup> Ka plan ba la tyrwa- The plan which had been offered

<sup>5</sup> U Pyrman- The watchman

<sup>6</sup> Ka Pyrta u Riewlum- The voice of the hill man

<sup>7</sup> Ka Rilum Mihngi- The Eastern Hills land

<sup>8</sup> U Nongsain Hima- The architect of the state

<sup>9</sup> U Hynniew Trep- The seven huts

<sup>10</sup> Achik Songbad- News

<sup>11</sup> Pring prang- Morning star

<sup>12</sup> Kubarangba- Language and voice

<sup>13</sup> A’Sangni Songbad- News of the whole country

<sup>14</sup> Ri Khasi Ri jong nga- Khasi land my land

<sup>15</sup> Ka Dak Ka jingjop- The sign of victory

<sup>16</sup> u Khyndriam, u Pnar, u Bhoi, u War- The Khasi sub-tribes

<sup>17</sup> Ki Samla Rilum- The Youth of the hills

<sup>18</sup> Dorbar Shnong- Traditional village council of the Khasis

<sup>19</sup> Nokma- A Garo word that means village headman or clan head

<sup>20</sup> Mawphor- Monolith or ritual stone

Social media's emergence has completely changed how people receive news, information, and messages. According to data from the Department of Telecommunications and the Ministry of Communications, Meghalaya alone has over 1.6 million internet users, both in rural and urban areas. The Voice of the People Party's entry into the national political arena, leveraging its power and potential, highlights political parties' use of social media platforms to connect with voters. The party's landmark achievements in the Lok Sabha election as well as the general election have been credited to their social media strategy, targeting young voters. The Voice of the People Party (VPP) used social media and other digital platforms as important engagement tools to successfully engage the youth demographic. Their outreach initiatives focused on relevant topics like digital infrastructure, education, and unemployment, all of which resonated with younger voters (Lamare 2024). VPP president Ardent M. Basaiawmoit has received a lot of online support for his aggressive campaign on social media and in the field, and he has emerged as a hub for YouTubers and influencers to produce content. This has greatly increased the VPP's appeal and visibility, and the candidates of the party have actively utilised platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to mobilise the masses and garner electoral support.

A number of podcasts have developed as avenues of disseminating political information to the masses. Such podcasts are streamed on different platforms like YouTube and Instagram and are now indispensable for politicians in presenting their agendas and plans to the public in an effort to obtain electoral backing. The Voice of the People Party (VPP) candidates have successfully leveraged these podcasts and have made significant appearances on shows like "Ha Shillong" and "TheVOY" to reach out to prospective voters and advance their political agendas.

The Voice of the People Party (VPP) official anthem, "Ha U Prah", became widely popular and was regularly played during social gatherings, from weddings to birthdays and anniversaries. It is accessible on media outlets like YouTube and Spotify and the track has helped in the development of a new populism for the party and has been pivotal in driving grassroots mobilisation and deepening the party's relationship with the people.

The discussion underscores the continuing relevance of media as a central force shaping political communication in Meghalaya. Traditional newspapers, patriotic literature, and community-based expressions created a strong foundation for political discourse during the Hill State Movement, while contemporary digital platforms have opened new channels that reach wider and younger audiences with remarkable speed. Political groups, particularly the Voice of the People Party, have recognised the value of these platforms and integrated them into their strategies to strengthen voter engagement and visibility. As political narratives increasingly unfold through both conventional and digital media, the region's democratic processes are likely to be influenced by how effectively parties, leaders, and citizens navigate these evolving communication spaces.

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