

THE BODO MOVEMENT: PAST AND PRESENT

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INTRODUCTION

The Boro or Bodo or Kachari is the earliest known inhabitant of Assam. The Bodos belong to racial origin of Mongoloid group. The Mongoloid population over time had formed a solid bloc spreading throughout the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys stretching to Cachar Hills of Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura extending to some parts of West Bengal, Bihar, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh with different identities. The Boro, Borok (Tripuri), Garo, Dimasa, Rabha, Chutiya, Tiwa, Sarania, Moholia, Kachari, Deuri, Borahi, Modahi, Sonowal, Thengal, Dhimal, Koch, Mech, Meche, Barman, Moran, Hajong, Rhamsa are historically, racially and linguistically of same ancestry. Since the historically untraced ages, the Bodo had exercised their highly developed political, legal and socio-cultural influences. Today the majority of Bodos are found concentrated in the foot hills of the Himalayan ranges in the north bank of the Brahmaputra valley.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BODO NATION

The Bodos had a glorious past history which is found mentioned in Hindu mythology like Vedic literature and epic like Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranas with different derogatory names like Ausura, Mlecha and Kirata dynasty. The Bodos had once ruled the entire part of Himalayan ranges extending to Brahmaputra valley with different names and dynasties. For the first time in the recorded history the Ahoms attacked and invaded their country in the early part of the 13th century which continued almost 200 years. Despite of many external invasions the Bodos lived as a free nation with dignity and honour till the British invaded their dominions. The British annexed their dominions one after another into British Indian territory just after the Treaty of Yandaboo signed on the 24th February, 1826 A.D. In the later years the Eastern Kachari Kingdom fell to the conspiracy of the British imperialists when king Erakdao or Gobindo Chandra died without any descendents, either lineal or adopted; the country was annexed deceitfully by a proclamation dated 14th August 1832 applying the infamous "Doctrine of Lapse". When Tularam Senapati or General Tularam died in 1854 A.D., his sovereign territory was annexed to the Nowgaon District of British dominion. The northern territory on the foothills of Bhutan, once referred as Kachari country or *undisputed home of Kacharis*, which later came to be known as Kachari Duars also remained independent under Jaolia Dewan till it was annexed by the British after the Treaty of Chinchula signed in 1864 A.D. ratified in 1867 A.D. The southern and western kingdoms -- Tripura and Koch Bihar remained as semi-independent native states till they joined the newly born independent state India in 1949 A.D.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To study the historical development of Bodo movement in different phases under different leadership of the time.
- ❖ To analyse the changing trend in the Bodo movement of the past and present.

METHODOLOGY

The study is analytical and explanatory in nature. The researcher has applied observation and a document review method. Based on set objectives the researcher have collected relevant information from the secondary sources like published books, magazines, journals, news paper etc.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN BODO MOVEMENT

The political movement and developments of the Bodos can be divided into three main phases viz. Pre-Colonial period (1900-1947), Post-Colonial period (1950-2003) and post-BTC period (2003 onwards).

1. BODO MOVEMENT IN PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD (1900-1947)

The political movement of the Bodos manifested as early as mid 19th century. However, no major development took place that time due to the absence of a proper political guidance. It was only during the first half of the 20th century their movement took proper course under the leadership of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma through his Brahma Dharma movement struggled to achieve political identity/recognition for the Bodos. Thus identity politics of plain tribals began to flourish under the leadership of several prominent tribal leaders of the time.

1.1 AAPTL AND BODO MOVEMENT (1933 TO 1947)

The “All Assam Plains Tribal League” (AAPTL) an umbrella organisation of plain tribals was formed in 1933 to preserve the interest of the plain tribals of Assam. Prior to the formation of AAPTL’ the Bodos had several student organisations with different names functioning in different localities. But, none of these organisations gave a political platform to the Bodo problems until AAPTL was formed. Significantly with the formation of AAPTL the political movement of the Bodos also gained its momentum towards proper direction. Further, the occurrence of series of events like the participation of the Bodos in the first general elections in 1937, different political policy formulations by the Sadullah ministry in 1938, and the formation of the Gopinath Bordoloi ministry in 1939 gave the Bodo movement a significant ground to flourish towards proper direction.

In subsequent years the Sadullah ministry abolished the Line System during the time of Civil Disobedience movement. On the other side, many Congress leaders including Gopinath Bordoloi was arrested due to their involvement in “Satyagraha against the World War II and the Quit India Movement”. After their release, these Congress leaders contested the 1946 pre-independence election and came out successful with majority to form the Government in Assam. Following the win in election Mr. Bhimbor Deori, the representative of the All Assam Plains Tribal League partnered with the Congress government. This gave chance to the tribal leader a great extent to explore the political situation in their favour. Under his initiatives certain provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 was amended and the regulation of “Tribal Belts and Blocks” were enacted by the Assam Government in the year 1947 by incorporating it in Chapter X. The amended Bill was passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1947 and approved by the Governor in the same year. In April 1946, when British Cabinet Mission visited India, some prominent leaders of Plain Tribals of Assam submitted a memorandum and demanded the following-

1. Reservation of 4 (four) seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly
2. Reservation of 16 (Sixteen) seats in the Assam Legislative Council,
3. One representative in the Viceroy’s Executive Council,
4. Three seats in the Central Legislative Assembly
5. One seat in the Central Legislative Council

6. Separate seats with separate electorate so that they expect to sent their worthwhile representatives
7. Not to include Assam in Pakistan Zone,
8. To safeguard the interest of the Tribals and Minority Communities in the post-colonial India,
9. To incorporate at least one or more Tribal member in the proposed Constituent Assembly to which the responsibility of drawing future of Constitution of India will be entrusted”.

Likewise, the Tribal League submitted another memorandum in March 1947 demanding for the creation of Scheduled Areas in the plain regions of Assam under the 5th Schedule of the Constitution. However, this demand was rejected outright by the Congress government. In spite of that many leaders of the Tribal League merged with the Congress dissolving their organisation. This blunder have caused detriment later to the tribal communities socio-economic and politically. Significantly, the Tribals of Brahmaputra valley were left at the mercy and goodwill of the Congress government of Assam for about two decades after independence. During that period, the Congress made efforts to generalise the problems of the plain tribes with Assamese mainstream, instead of giving a special attention to their development”.

2. BODO MOVEMENT IN POST-COLONIAL PERIOD (1950-2003)

During the post colonial period the growing political consciousness among Bodos came as a significant political development of the time. By the time, the Bodos had already begun to ponder around the questions of their survival with distinct ethnic identity in chauvinist Assamese society. Moreover, the anti-tribal policies adopted by the state government time and again also began to seclude the Bodos from the composite Assamese society. The discriminatory attitudes of the chauvinist Assamese lobby towards tribal in no time had already fermented an idea of the revival of their identity amongst the handful enlightened Bodos. Over and again, the exploitation of tribals due to their simplicity made them felt deprived and marginalised community in all aspects of life. Later this feeling of inferiority complex compounded with various socio-cultural and political-economic problems of the tribals became a breeding point of plain tribal’s identity politics. By the time, the Bodos had already started consolidating a strong ground for ethnic assertion through socio-political mobilisation in the Bodo dominated regions for their all round development including the maintenance of their culture and heritage in their conceived separate land. Meanwhile, the demand for separate homeland in the neighbouring hills districts of the then undivided Assam which began to echoed the entire hills region was also felt along the tribal regions in Brahmaputra valley. The successful tales of Naga movement and the demand of different Hill Tribes viz. Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Mizo etc. for a separate homeland under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India gave a groundbreaking momentum to the demand of plain tribals for separate homeland. The Bodos became more enthusiastic and determined to pursue their supreme political aspiration when after a long run movement, the Naga Tribes, the Khasi Tribes, the Jaintia Tribes, the Garo Tribes and the Mizo Tribes were granted their own states. For the purpose the Bodos also carried a spontaneous movement later gaining them a separate electoral and linguistic status.

2.1. BIRTH OF ABSU AND PTCA: UDAYACHAL MOVEMENT

It may be rightly argued that the past history of the movements of different Hill Tribals has naturally provided a strong source of inspiration to the Bodos for the separate state movement. In fact, the dream of Bodos for separate homeland reinforced with the Hill Tribal movement’s reaching its zenith. As a result a handful of enlightened Bodos began to organise themselves and mobilised their community to assert for separate state for their survival and development.

In the mean time, many socio-cultural and political organizations of Bodos also came into existence. In particular the formation of All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on 15th February, 1967 came as a landmark event in the history of Bodo movement. Though many Bodo organisations and association have existed in different localities before ABSU was formed but these organisations were least influential due to absence of co-ordination and their operation was also limited to certain localities only. Notably, there was no common forum for the Bodo students at the state level until ABSU was formed in the beginning of 1967. The birth of ABSU gave a whole new direction and much needed strength to the Bodo movement. During the initial years ABSU was seen primarily concerned with the development of the Bodo language, culture and heritage, socio-economic and political emancipation of their community. Nevertheless, the political aspiration of separate homeland has been the principal objective of ABSU since its inception. By and large, ABSU took the role of chief architect for the separate state Bodoland movement in Assam.

It may be mention that the birth of ABSU has its root in the declaration of reorganisation of Assam on federal structure on 13th January 1967 by the then PM Indira Gandhi. The Bodo leaders welcomed this move by the Union government. This declaration gave impetus and foundation to the dream of Bodos for separate homeland. As such the Bodos and other tribal leaders came to form a common political platform for the political unification of plain tribals. In 27th February 1967 a tribal political party with the name PTCA was formed which later took the key role in the political movement of Bodos. It was formed by a host of prominent tribal leaders like "Mr. Biruson Doley" the founder President and Charan Narzary' the General Secretary.

In May 20, 1967, the PTCA submitted a memorandum to the then President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain demanding for the creation of 'Autonomous Region' for the plain tribals of Assam". This demand took a great velocity by leap and bound when ABSU extended their full support. But the state government paid no interest to their demand and this unwillingness attitude of government to address the tribal issues caused violence in the plain areas of Assam. In retaliation against the stubbornness of state government the ABSU and PTCA took a bold decision to boycott the Parliamentary election on 19th May 1968 to draw the attention of the Union Government. This move also failed to bring amicable agreement between the PTCA and government to address the plain tribal's issues. As part of strategy of movement PTCA contested the next State Assembly election held in 1972 in which Mr. Charan Narzary was elected from Kokrajhar West constituency. This victory gave a tremendous enthusiasm to the PTCA members and the Bodo community at large.

By the time the tribal leaders have understood and were convinced with the fact that unless they do not have an adequate power share in the State their political struggle is meaningless and their prosperity is impossible. And by January 1973, PTCA switched their movement from "Autonomous Region" to "Udayachal" the "Union Territory". The demand for "Udayachal" also remained unfulfilled as the State government was not willing to consider it either. Simultaneously the Bodo Sahitya Sabha also launched another movement for Roman script from the other end. This movement ended with the agreement to accept Devanagari script for Bodo language.

In subsequent years, the political tumultuous at national politics and the proclamation of National Emergency in 1975 shook the political environment across the nation. Under this critical juncture the movement of PTCA for separate state also came into crossroad situation which gradually lost its momentum in later years. But as soon as the Emergency was lifted in 1977, the Lok Sabha Election was held in the same year. The PTCA contested the Lok Sabha election in which Mr. Charan Narzary won from the Kokrajhar (ST) constituency. Similarly, in the State Assembly election of 1978, the newly formed Janata Party forged the coalition government with the PTCA as its ally. During the year PTCA won four seats in the election but unfortunately this government collapsed after one and half year.

After joining the government, PTCA gave up the Union Territory demand and retreated to their earlier demand for Autonomous Region without the consent of their partner organisations. This betrayal and opportunist act of PTCA resented the young tribal supporters and in particular the ABSU. This difference later created an internal rift within and outside the PTCA. As a result ABSU withdrew their support from PTCA; on the other side the

younger section of the PTCA members also formed a new political party called PTCA (Progressive) on 22nd May, 1979 with an active co-operation of tribal youths and All Bodo Student's Union. Soon after the formation, the PTCA (P) submitted a memorandum to the then PM Mrs. Indira Gandhi demanding for the creation of separate state with the name "Mishing-Bodoland" on 8th July, 1980. The demand of PTCA (P) for separate political autonomy instead of Bodoland came into focus of the Central Government. On 28th August 1980 a joint discussion was arranged between the Central ministers, State ministers and the tribal leaders. Interestingly the then Governor of Assam Mr. L.P Singh remarked that 'Udayachal' is misnomer and Bodoland is the most appropriate linguistically. This tripartite talk also failed to bring fruitful result. Instead the sharp differences in opinion between PTCA and PTCA (P) visibly cropped up which stood as hurdle in finding out a unanimous solution of Bodoland. These internal differences within the party and between the tribal leaders caused dilution of their credibility and gradually their strong foothold among the Bodos also shrunk. And, their apparent ideological differences also sharply affected the political scenario of the plain tribals. As a matter of fact the internal conflict distracted many other Bodo leaders from their supreme objective.

Nevertheless, ABSU made a serious effort to bring both the PTCA and PTCA (P) into reunification on the basis of their common values and ambition and for the greater cause of the Bodo community. After the failed attempt PTCA (P) was dissolved in a convention held at Harisinga on 17th, 18th and 19th April, 1984 and a new political party was formed with the name UTNLF under the leadership of Binai Kungur Basumatary. This party immediately after the formation submitted a memorandum in May 1984 to the then PM Indira Gandhi demanding the formation of 'Union Territory'. In July 1985 also it submitted a memorandum to the then PM Rajiv Gandhi on the same demand. Under certain circumstances the UNLFT like PTCA also split into two factions- UTNLF and United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front (UBNLF). Looking to their internal conflict and disagreement within the government also bothered least to solve the Bodo issues.

2.2. ABSU IN BODOLAND MOVEMENT

The failure of these political parties in later years forced the ABSU to spearhead the Bodo movement. ABSU has been the guiding force to many Bodo political parties having knit and organised structure spread across the Bodo dominated areas. ABSU had a strong hold among the Bodos and it has been fighting against the socio-economic and political exploitation of Bodos. ABSU took the legacy of Bodo Movement and gave a new direction under different leadership. The Bodo movement under ABSU took a new course and vigour under the visionary leader UN Brahma. It ushered a new era in the history of Bodo movement with the beginning of 'democratic and non-violent' movement. Under the visionary leader UN Brahma the movement intensified from 1987. On January 1, 1987 ABSU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta mainly demanding for separate State highlighting socio-economic, cultural and educational issues of the Bodos in their 92 points charter of demands. Likewise, ABSU organised a massive rally at Judges' Field in Guwahati on 12th June 1987. With thousands of Bodos participation the rally echoed entire Guwahati with the sloganeering "Divide Assam 50-50" and "Do or Die". In subsequent years ABSU took drastic steps to intensify their movement. In their agitation it took series of bold steps like bandh, Rail Roko, National Highway Blockade, hunger strike etc. ABSU in its 1988 conference held in Bashbari took a major decision to suspend 89 non-political demands and retained only three major political demands – 1. Separate state of "Bodoland" curving out of Assam, 2. Creation of Nilachal and Lalung Autonomous Councils and 3. Inclusion of Boro-Kocharis living in the Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills in the ST (Hills) list. In this conference, another ally organisation of ABSU called "Bodo Peoples' Action Committee" (BPAC) was formed with a view to muster the greater support and participation of Bodos irrespective of their political affiliations.

However, the Bodoland movement turned violent under various circumstances and compulsions. Further, the violence escalated when the state machinery and the police tried to suppress the agitators with iron hand in the

name of maintaining law and order situations. The strife environment came to dominate the Bodo region with many events of counter actions and reactions between the police and the agitators. During this period many Bodo women suffered brutal rape, molestation, loots and destructions of public assets, forcible leave from homes and hearts etc. in the name of police raid. This violent movement continued for long six years which came to an end with the signing of Bodo Accord between Union Government, State Government and ABSU-BPAC members on 20th February, 1993 that led to the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). But soon the problem of demarcation of BAC boundary came as a serious problem among the political leaders and non-tribals in particular. This issue led the non-tribals living in the periphery of the BAC to demand for exclusion of non-tribal areas from the proposed Bodoland areas. As per the accord the areas of BAC was demarcated comprising of contiguous geographical areas between river Sonkosh and Mazbat/river Pasnoi. Thus the boundary of BAC was finalised by paying no heed to the demand of the non-Bodos living in the BAC area. This subsequently contributed towards causing political unrest in the Bodoland which still resurges from time to time.

2.3. BODOLAND MOVEMENT IN POST BAC

After signing of the Bodo Accord on 20th February, 1993, an Interim Council for the period of six months comprising of the movement leaders was constituted with Mr. S.K. Bwiswmuthiary as the Chief Executive Member. The Council collapsed as it failed to fulfil the aspirations of the Bodos due to many problems that came in the way of developmental activities. The main reasons were the failure to demarcate a clear-cut boundary, failure to provide relief and rehabilitation of surrendered militants, delimitation of the constituencies to hold elections of the BAC and inadequate power and finance of BAC etc. As such the Chief Executive Sansuma Khungur Bwiswmuthiary tendered his resignation on moral ground due to unable to fulfil the desired aspirations of Bodo community. He was succeeded by Mr. Preamsing Brahma as the Chief Executive Member. In this backdrop, the then ABSU President Mr. Swmbla Basumatary went further steps ahead to denounced the Bodo Accord itself by submitting a memorandum to Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the then Prime Minister of India on 9th March 1996, and declared to revive the movement for separate state. The non-fulfilment of the Bodoland and the non-responsive attitudes of the government by the time had already led frustration among a section of peace-loving Bodos which eventually forced them to develop radical ideas and adopt violent means for the Bodoland. In this light, the Bodo Security Force (BrSF) formed in 1986 was renamed as National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) which already had resorted to killings and resumed violence in the name of Sovereign Bodoland demand. During their arms struggle the region continued to burn. Unfortunately, many innocent people had to bore the brute of arm struggle including the President of ABSU Mr. Swmbla Basumatary who was assassinated by the suspected NDFB militant.

The period of Bodo movement was also well known for the emergence of another famous militant outfit the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) in 1996 under the leadership of Chairman Chilagang Basumatary. After its formation the BLT began to steer the Bodo movement as another umbrella organization of the Bodo which could be capable of governing the whole Bodo society in the right track to get their professed status realized. Soon the BLT joined hands with ABSU; the movement for separate state was revived. The members of both the outfits realized that it was not possible to get the legitimate rights by using soft techniques only. So, they decided to revive some old policies and ideologies of the previous moments which primarily made the Bodo people more conscious, assertive and powerful.

Another ugly twist came in the Bodoland movement during the years of struggle after the formation of BLT. In later years due to their urge for political dominance over the Bodo dominated areas the BLT and NDFB developed ideological differences. The main ideological difference between the BLT and the NDFB was that the former stood for the formation of a separate state Bodoland within the country, while the later stood for the creation of a sovereign state out of Indian Territory. This ideological difference took ugly spat in later years

when the BLT and NDFB engaged in fratricidal killings. In this fratricidal war the Bodos got polarised in the line of ABSU supporters and NDFB supporters which not only brought political setback but also threatened the harmonious existence of brotherhood in the region.

In the long run, a fresh process of dialogue with the Bodos was initiated by the government of India in the last part of 1997. This began as a good gesture from the government to respite the people of the region from chaotic environment. As such the Government of India and the State Government made concerted efforts to fulfil the aspirations of the Bodos relating to their cultural identity, language, education and economic development. Towards the end, 30 rounds of tripartite talks were held between the Government of India, Government of Assam and the BLT since March, 2000 to February, 2003. As a result, it is agreed to create a self-governing body for the Bodo areas in the state of Assam in the name of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and the area of the BTC's jurisdiction is popularly known as the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD). A Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and the BLT on 10th February, and 2003. By amending the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution BTAD was created comprising of four districts viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. Along with that the Bodo language got incorporated under the Eight Schedule of the constitution. The creation of BTAD ushered a new hope of development in the region with a promise to ensure socio-cultural, economic and political security to the Bodos in particular and to all in general through self-governing administration with limited executive and legislative power. Some other prominent Bodo organizations like the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) extended their support to the aforesaid decision. Following this landmark development in the history of Bodo movement ABSU also suspended their demand for separate state Bodoland in mark of respect of BTC Accord.

2.4. CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN BODOLAND MOVEMENT

The contribution of Bodo women in the movement was tremendous and compounded with tales of endless and untold sufferings. Under the initiative of the visionary leader UN Brahma the women organisation All Tribal Women Welfare Federation(ATWWF) was formed which was later renamed as Bodo ABWWF. After its inception ABWWF took women issues in particular and simultaneously involved in the Bodoland movement side by side under the shadow of ABSU. However, during the counter activities of the Bodoland movement, the Bodo women suffered the brutality in the hand of state machinery. As a matter of fact many Bodo women were gang raped by the police forces during the movement in the name of raid. The horrendous Bhumka incident of mass gang rape perpetrated by the Assam police in 1988 and the butchering of Bodos in Gohpur massacre under the orchestration of state machinery remained immortal as darkest day in the history of Bodo movement. The 12th May of 1988 has been immortalized in the pages of the history of Bodoland movement because Helena Basumatary, the young girl of 15 years and Gaide Basumatary, aged 32 a mother of six month old child from Suripara village martyred for the cause of Bodoland. Many women fall victim of rape, atrocities and serious human rights violation in the hand of state machinery during the Bodoland movement.

Throughout the different courses of movement many changes came in the Bodo society, many people laid their lives, many suffered wrath and atrocities of state machinery and many rendered homeless but these sufferings of untold miseries and obstacles which they came across during movement also instilled them with consciousness about their rights and liberties. Frankly speaking, the Bodos carried out prolong struggles to get their legitimate status in the society. Literally the Bodoland movement was successful in inculcating a new courage in the minds of the Bodos of different parts of the state which makes them conscious of their all round development.

3. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN POST BTC (2003 Onwards)

Following the formation of BTC the BLT cadres led by Hagrama Mohilary surrendered before the government with arms and ammunitions at Kokrajhar on 6th December, 2003. It came as a major political development in the

trouble-torn BTAD region marking the end of seven years old insurgency. With the BLT returning to mainstream politics and society the normalcy in the region also began to prevail.

In a view to administer the BTC a 12 member interim Executive Council under the leadership of Hagrama Mohilary was formed in Kokrajhar on 7th December, 2003. Thereafter in 2005, the Election Commission of Assam declared to hold election in BTC on 13th May 2005. Following this declaration a 16 members Convenor Committee was formed by the ABSU and Ex-BLT members and formed a new Bodo political party with the name and style of Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) on 12th, April 2005. However, the internal differences sparked between the Ex-BLT members and the ABSU members over the issue of leadership. In the mean time, the first BTC election was held on 13th May, 2005. During the election a massive violence occurred between the Hagrama supporters dominantly Ex-BLT cadres and Rabiram supporters dominantly ABSU members especially in Dotoma and Bonorgaon due to internal differences. Because of such circumstances the election in these two places were postponed and a re-election was held in November, 2005. After the election, amid violence and disagreement the former BLT leader Mr. Hagrama Mohilary was elected as the Chief of BTC. Under his leadership a Legislative Council was constituted with 40 members to look after the administration and development works in the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD). The remaining six members were nominated by the Governor of Assam from the unrepresented communities. Thus, altogether 46 Member Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA) represented in the Council from all communities of BTAD area for the development of the area.

Following the internal differences over the issues of leadership and Council Election related clashes the BPPF split into two factions immediately after the BTC election. While the Rabiram led faction retained erstwhile name BPPF' whereas, Hagrama faction renamed it as Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF). In the subsequent years the BPF under Hagrama Mohilary prospered and rose to popularity by gaining more and more support to become a dominant regional political party in BTAD in particular and Assam in general. As a matter of fact, in the 12th Assam Legislative election of 2006 none of the political parties gained absolute majority. INC also failed to cross the magic figure and managed to grab only 53 seats. While the AGP-BJP pre-poll ally also failed in this electoral battle. The failure of AGP-BJP pre-poll ally paved way to the INC for retaining power by entering into post-poll alliance with the BPF. The INC successfully formed the coalition government under the leadership of Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi with the support of 22 independent candidates. Remarkably, the BPF played a role of King-maker to Congress in this election with 11 seats. This ensured BPF three important Cabinet ministries in the Gogoi led Congress government which successfully completed the five years tenure.

On the other hand, the BPF government successfully administered the Council administration in the first ever five years term. A host of developmental activities and socio-economic welfare programmes were successfully carried out and implemented during that period. After the end of first ever Council government the second Council election was held on 9th April, 2010. In this election also the BPF once again came out with thumping majority by capturing "32 of the 40 seats. While the Congress, an alliance partner of the BPF in the state manage to win three seats. In contrast, the main opposition party in the BTC area the BPPF managed to win only one seat, while the UDPF won one and independent candidates won from three constituencies. Once again the BPF formed the Council government under the leadership of Mr. Hagrama Mohilary for the second consecutive terms. Thus, under the stalwart strong leadership of Hagrama Mohilary the BPF emerged as the most popular party in BTAD with unprecedented popular support and organizational base compared to the BPPF.

However, in the 13th Assam Assembly election held in 2011, the Congress successfully came out with absolute majority. Despite of being in a position to form the government in its own the Congress decided to form a coalition government with BPF due to the declaration of pre-poll alliance by Congress president Mrs. Sonia Gandhi before the 13th Assembly Election. The coalition of the Congress and the BPF was formed even after the declaration of result as a matter of political expediency. However, the internal differences started brewing within the congress further creating the internal division to political lobbies- one led by Chief Minister Turun Gogoi and

other led by a Cabinet Minister Hemanta Biswa Sharma. Amid this political thug of war within Congress, BPF got sidelined and in later years it withdrew its supports from Congress government.

Astonishingly, the landslide victory of BJP in 2014 Lok Sabha election changed the political scenario of the entire nation including Assam. For the first time in the political history of Assam BJP made an overwhelming victory in 7 seats out of 14 Lok Sabha seats from the State. The BJP formed the government at the centre under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Modi wave in the country also brought a surprise change in the political climate of Assam. In the 2016 State Assembly election the BJP-AGP-BPF trio formed a pre-poll alliance and came out with landslide victory to form the coalition government in the State. It may be mentioned here that the political earthquake like event triggered within the Congress when the Himanta Biswa Sharma led faction merged into BJP. This event took Congress to almost a total collapse in Assam. In this historic win BJP bagged 60 seats and its pre-poll allies BPF and AGP won 12 and 14 seats respectively. In this coalition government three senior BPF MLAs were inducted in the Cabinet minister led by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. Interestingly, BPF has been a coalition partner in the State government since its inception.

Of late, the course of politics in BTAD has undergone visible changes with the growing influences of the ABSU and emergence of other polarized forces in BTAD. ABSU in particular has played a pioneering role in the emergence of strong political opponent Peoples Coordination for Democratic Rights (PCDR) in the last Council Election. The 2015 Council Election brought almost a political earthquake in BPF camp. The consecutive two terms ruling BPF found itself into a dilemma of political immersion in this Council election as it suffered a major setback with their winning numbers drastically came down to 20 seats. The party in this election failed to cross the magic figure. Despite of shortfall the party managed to form the government for the third consecutive term taking supports of Independent candidates. Specially, 'PCDR' the ABSU and ceasefire NDFB (P) backed conglomeration of several organizations and the parallel force of non-Boro organization Sanmita Jangosthiya Aikya Mancha (SJAM) and AIUDF emerged as a stiff competitor of BPF. Remarkably, 'PCDR' the successor of former political rival BPPF and SJAM assumed a central role to backlash the political supremacy of BPF. This election had seen the rise of PCDR and SJAM with each winning as many as 7 seats and 3 seats; while 4 seats, 2 seats and 1 seat going in favor of AIUDF, Ana-boro Suraksha Samiti and BJP respectively. The drastic fall in the winning seats of BPF in 2015 Council Elections may be an alarm of declining their popularity.

3.1. RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN BODO MOVEMENT

In 2010, ABSU started the third phase of separate state Bodoland movement afresh under the leadership of Pramod Boro, the president of ABSU when the UPA government announced creation of new state Telengana curving out of Andhra Pradesh state. The creation of Telengana on 2nd June, 2014 rekindled the hope of the Bodos for a separate Bodoland state. In this light ABSU-PJACBM-UDP and BPPF on 4 September 2013 under the leadership of ABSU submitted a memorandum to the Home Minister of India demanding separate state Bodoland along with other issues. Since 2013 these organisations have been organizing series of agitation programs. In the year 2015, on 14th and 15th November ABSU organized protest movement at Jantar-Mantar in New Delhi and called 12 hours bandh in collaboration with NFNS (National Federation for New States) on 29th December, 2015 for the creation of Bodoland state. This movement grabbed national attention and sympathy and solidarity of a few national politicians. The ABSU continues the Bodoland movement till date taking series of activities from time to time. And a series of tripartite talks have been held so far between the Union government, State government and the ABSU and its partner organisations.

It may also be mentioned that NDFB which was fighting for sovereign Bodoland during its initial years have now retracted to separate state Bodoland within Indian Union. NDFB took up arms to struggle when the government turned deaf ears to the peaceful protest and demonstrations and their submission of memorandum after memorandum was ignored. When their pleas and appeals were unheard they started killings as the last

resort. In later years NDFB sought to return to the mainstream society that led them to declare ceasefire in 2004 and entered into formal ceasefire in 2005 and submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Dr. Monmohan Singh urging him to start formal political dialogue to resolve the protracted Boro issues. But disappointed with the peace process the organization opted to continue their fight for the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Bodos. In the meantime the organisation suffered a split into factions- NDFB (R), NDFB (P) and NDFB (S) due to certain circumstances. However, following certain positive indications and messages from the Government of India, they again ceased their military activities by declaring a unilateral ceasefire on 1st August, 2011. They entered into a formal ceasefire on November 29, 2013 and since then, they have been holding talks with the government interlocutors namely Mr. P.C. Haldar IPS (Rtd), Mr. Dineshwar Sharma IPS (Rtd) and now Mr. A.B. Mathur IPS (Rtd) to find out ways and means for resolving the longstanding political issue of the Bodos. But sudden Fast Tract trial of the leaders and cadres of the NDFB (R) faction Chairman Ranjan Daimari and several other accused in a CBI Special Court since December 11, 2017 on allegation of serial blast on 30th October 2008 in the midst of the ongoing peace process has utterly confused and dismayed the peace loving people. The honourable CBI Special Court pronounced its judgement and quantum of punishment on 28th and 30th of January, 2019 awarding life sentences to Chairman Ranjan Daimary and nine others in the said case. The Bodo people, its apolitical, political and intelligentsias expressed their apprehensions that this might derail and jeopardise the hard earned peace process.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, it is clear that the Bodos over the years have struggled for their political rights and for safeguarding their distinct ethnic identity, culture and language and for the overall development of the region. Over the years the Bodos have waged a movement both over-ground and underground to achieve their supreme political aspiration 'the separate state Bodoland'. The Bodo movement have undergone changes in several phases under different leadership of the time and under several circumstances and compulsion. The movement during the initial stage began with the demand of "Autonomous Region" under the spearhead of PTCA and later switched to "Udayachal" a movement for Union Territory. The Bodo movement took a new direction in 1987 when ABSU under the leadership of UN Brahma spearheaded the movement which later switched to separate state Bodoland. During these years the movement took a violent course with the beginning of arms struggle. The movement also witnessed an ugly fratricidal war when arm groups 'BLT and NDFB' confronted due to their ideological differences. Throughout the movement the Bodos suffered tremendous atrocities and many form of human rights violation in the hand of state machinery in the name of counter-action against rebel. Many young Bodo youths laid down their lives and many women were raped and many rendered homeless during the movement. In 2003 a major political development took place in the history of Bodo movement with the formation of BTC. The creation of BTC ushered a new hope of peace and development among the Bodos in particular and to overall region in general through a system of self-governance within limited jurisdiction over executive and legislative power. This political development has brought notable changes in social and political life of Bodos. Nevertheless, the Bodo movement along with many tales of untold sufferings also brought about many positive changes in the Bodo society like- political consciousness, preservation of language, culture and ethnic identity, socio-economic development etc. Despite of several political developments the struggle for separate state Bodoland still continues. In short this paper' brought many heroic struggles of Bodos to light originating from their natural urge to live in dignity with social and political rights. In this light it helps us to understand the gradual changes of the Bodo community, emergence of Bodo nationalism and phases of their struggle for getting an entity of their own.

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