

## **CHAPTER – V**

### **DETERMINANTS OF THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE OF BTAD, 2004 to 2016**

The present chapter is intended to highlight the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD in the elections for BTCLA, the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha elections in the BTAD from the year 2004 to 2016 in the State of Assam. The chapter is divided in two parts. The first part analyses the importance of election in a democracy, concept and the factors of voting behaviour in general and the second part analyses the Socio-Economic Status (SES) and the relation between SES factors and voting behaviour of the respondents in the BTAD areas comprising of four districts viz. Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri of the State of Assam in India. The observation of the determinants will be attempted from different social, political, economic and cultural points of views.

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

India is the world's largest democracy and a Country to the second most populated in the world. The age of India's democracy is roughly above 70 years. It is a land of diversity not only in terms of races, religions, cultures, languages but also in geography and demographic pattern. From time to time, the diversity has stood as a major challenge to the idea of India's nationhood. Many a times, multifaceted problem of socio-economic, political and cultural, physiographic and demographic have manifested as an obstacle in one form or the others in the process of nation building. Over the years the idea of India's nation has met challenges by several sectarian and separatist from time to time. Such sectarian ideology not only threatens the very basis of the unity in diversity by creating socio-political unrest and at times it also endangers the security of the State. And, when such ideology takes a political overtone, it not only infests the political institutions but also weaken the very foundation of democracy which at times manifest in the form of syndrome in electoral politics.

Nevertheless, the foundation of India's democracy was not erected in overnight rather it was a hard earned by our freedom fighters from the colonial rulers and architect by our first generation and great visionary leaders passing down to the leaders of

contemporary times. Not astonishingly the democracy in India has marked its healthy presence spread over seven decades amid all challenges. Undoubtedly, the values and emotions of democratic traditions and cultures today we share and experience is perhaps inherited from our past legacies which now have deeply rooted in Indian societies with the times.

In general, the most vital instrument and indispensable parts of the Indian democracy has been the election, political parties, voters, universal adult franchise, where the citizen irrespective of class, cast, religion, education and economic status is assured of their participation and exercise of these political rights. Since, the beginning of modern democracy in India the citizen has routinely exercised these rights to change the governments both at the centre and the States.

## **5.2 MEANING OF ELECTION**

Election is an integral part of democratic process. It is a formal decision making process by which a person choose an individual to hold public office. Elections have significant contributions to the growth and survival of a democratic government. Election motivates an individual to involve himself more and more in the decision making process and to identify himself more and more with the political system.”<sup>214</sup>

A sound system of election is the backbone of a democracy. In modern times election is the only known means of securing representation. To the extent that representation is effective, the government becomes more truly responsible. Electoral engineering is therefore of utmost significance to the nature and health of the country’s politics. It consists partly of the choice of right technology and the sociology of elections is also important for the success of a democratic polity.

### **5.2.1 ORIGIN OF ELECTION**

The origin of election as a means of choosing among alternatives cannot be clearly established except on the basis of literary evidence. From the narratives of Haner and Tacitus of ancient Greece and Germany it can be learned that the victorious leader in tribal wars was usually accepted by acclamation both by the victors and the

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<sup>214</sup>Saha Indrani, Participation of women in the Assam Legislative Assembly Elections Since 1970’s: Special reference to the tribal women in Assam, Published in JONER, ‘A Peer Reviewed Multidisciplinary Research Journal’ , January – December 2013, Issue 1, p- 108

vanquished. There are references of folks taking sides in the selection of a leader against the background of a political controversy. This seems to have been the next step in the evolution of election.<sup>215</sup> An Athenian law of the 6<sup>th</sup> century prescribes that, in the case of a civil turmoil, the citizens must join one or the other side of war or lose their status as citizens. Abstention from conflict was regarded as an invitation to tyranny. The idea of election was also implied in the process of filling in public offices by the system of lots from among tribal demes or units of local government. Such a system facilitated short term reaction among the holders of public offices, as in the case of the Athenian Council of Five Hundred. Any other method was feared to offend the principle of equality and thus open the door to ambitious men who might seek to exploit their electoral victory for usurping political power.<sup>216</sup>

In the Greek and Athen Assemblies voting was usually open and by the show of hands. Acclamation by voice vote was also not uncommon. In deciding controversial issues relating Law suits and social boycotts decisions were taken by the use of secret ballots in the form of black and white pebbles or marked or unmarked shells or curved wooden tablets etc. In parts of ancient Europe voting was done either by acclamation in support of a leader or decision or war by the clashing of spears or shields. Whatever might be the method of voting the principle of unanimity was insisted upon. The participants were considered equal and hence the decision must be taken by unanimous vote. But as the condition of equality gave way to inequality in status and power, as for example, in the Medieval Polish Diet, the unanimity rule proved unworkable, for it often represented in effect, a form of vote which anyone could exercise and thus collective decision became impossible.

In ancient India, there were certain non-monarchical States, usually referred to as Gana-rajya with representative assemblies. These assemblies were reported to have adopted regular procedures of deliberation and decisions by voting, if necessary. The vote was called "CHHANDA" which means literally 'wish' or 'desire.' In other words, a member was expressing his free will or desire while voting. Voting was resorted to whenever there were differences and majority opinion was carried out. At times voting

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<sup>215</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. VIII, (p- 134.) Cited by- Gowalini, Radha Rani, "General Elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly (1978-1985): A Study in Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour", A PhD Thesis submitted to Gauhati University, (1993), p- 1, (Archived: Shodhganga-inflibnet)

<sup>216</sup>Ibid, p-2

was executed with the help of voting tickets which were colored. The tickets were called "SALAKAS" and the voting was called "SALAKAGRAHANA". There was a Salakagrahoke or Taker of tickets or voters. He was appointed by the Assembly to conduct the ballot either by secret vote or openly.<sup>217</sup>

In medieval Europe the principle of election was followed to a limited extent in the matter of succession to the throne. This was particularly so in Germany where the rulers succeeded to their position partly by heredity and partly by election. The principle of "Primogeniture" was not observed as there might be several competing candidates, all of royal blood. One of these competing candidates would have to be recognized and to this limited extent teutonic Kings might be termed elective from the very beginning whereas in other nations of Western Europe this element of election dwindled and the principle of heredity secured legal recognition. In medieval Germany the reversed process gained currency. Here the principle of heredity sank formally into the background and recognition was finally given to the elective principle. The struggle for supremacy between the Empire and Papacy during the middle ages had also prevented the tendency towards absolute monarchy. Pope Gregory VII revived the theory of Electoral Monarchy and from the Election of King Rudolph in 1077; it was never repressed in spite of the efforts of the latter rulers to consolidate dynastic succession.

In the modern times, the principle of election gained ground along with the movement for constitutional government and democracy. The English, American and French Revolution led the way. The age of despotism had given place to the Age of Democracy. With the rise of Parliaments and Assemblies on the ruins of despotic regimes, the principle of elections became clearly recognized as the best means of democratic government.

## **5.2.2 RATIONALE OF ELECTION**

Election is an integral part of democracy is the key element for the survival of democratic government. It provides a peaceful mechanism to the people for their participation in the political, electoral, administrative process and institutions of democratic country. Edward Shils argues that the "drawing of the whole adult

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<sup>217</sup>K.P Jayaswal (2005): "Hindu Polity" A constitutional History of India in Hindu Times, 1918, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishtan Publication, p- 90-91

population periodically into contact with the symbols of the centre of national political life give them a sense of their own political significance”.<sup>218</sup> During election many factors work very actively. Social environment is likely to experience substantial changes with the beginning of election process. Such changes tend to create pressure in public psychology. Accordingly, the public life also reacts in a particular way. Mutual trust, brotherhood, friendliness, reliance etc. sometimes become lousy due to the ill effects of election related political exercise. In other words, “election may be understood to reflect changing option and social conception about citizenship and equality. All persons become equal before the ballot box even if they are not equal in other respects. It may also be argued that elections serve to integrate an organization or polity by maintaining legitimacy of the entity”<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, the commoner can enjoy their socio-political rights in society by participating in election and by exercising voting right to elect their representatives. Voters of a democratic country makes own decision in election politics. Conscious exercise of voting rights can help the voters to choose right representatives. Here comes the significance of study of the voting behaviour in electoral politics as one of the core aspects of election in a democracy.

### **5.3 CONCEPT OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR**

Voting behaviour’ covers a vast field of election such as examination of voting records, compilation of voting statistics and computation of electoral shift. So, it is treated as a sub-field of political behaviour.<sup>220</sup> Actually it is the most significant factor in election. It also tests the degree of rationality of a voter. Voting behaviour may vary from person to person based on their socio-economic, political and cultural motivation. Political behaviour of voters belonging to different caste, religion, class, and gender are not uniform. It also differs from culture to culture, place to place and time to time. Generalisation of voting behaviour of people is not possible as it is motivated by the personal choice of the voters. Study of voting behaviour is important because the socio-political status of the voters can be easily assessed, which in turn, becomes useful for understanding electoral psychology of a group of people. Thus, the study of voting

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<sup>218</sup>Edward Shils (1965): Political Development in the New States. Berkeley; Mouton & Co. p. 39

<sup>219</sup>Edward Shils (1965): Ibid P. 39

<sup>220</sup>Paul Henson Appleby (1949): Policy and Administration, U.S.A.: University of Alabama Press, p.168.

behaviour can help the political scientist, scholars, academician, contesting candidates as well as the students of political science.

### **5.3.1 DETERMINANTS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR**

There are good numbers of factor such as caste, religion, age, gender, education, income level, family environment, social status, political consciousness etc. which influences the voting behaviour of the people. Voting behaviour of different classes of people is influenced by these factors at the time of voting. Some of the major determinants of the voting behaviour are discussed below-

Education is the most influencing factor among all other factors. Education makes a person politically alert and helps to take right decisions in voting. It helps the people to choose the right person. Reasoning power tends to be higher among the literates than illiterates and normally helps the educated to exercise conscious decision in voting. In contradictory, the illiterates are vulnerable of being influenced easily by fake promises of the party workers and in most cases they take the voting decision on the basis of election campaigning. "In democratic countries the level of education is the most crucial voting determinant but its effects may vary in accordance with many local circumstances and national conditions. In a country like India where one-third population is illiterate, it is quite natural that ascriptive ties and 'primordial loyalties' are often decisive influences in determining the voting behaviour of a citizen".<sup>221</sup>

Economic condition of a person is another determinant of voting behaviour. Different income level creates strong effect in the decision-making of the voters because the income level of a person indicate the standard of living, standard of social interaction and their ability to afford needs and demands. Income of a person has a direct bearing upon one's life. "One can certainly analyze the social composition of the Indian electorates on the basis of class. The class basis of Indian society is still too nebulous and too ill-defined to make a study of class and voting behaviour in India particularly meaningful or significant". Decision making of poor class in voting tends to be different from that of middle and higher class. Poor people living in abject poverty struggles to fulfil their basic needs can be easily influenced simply by the campaigning of political leaders at the time of election and sometimes by the party cadres by making

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<sup>221</sup>Norman D Palmer (1976): "Election & Political Development- The South Asian Experience" New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House. P- 296

fake promises. Illiterate poor very often believe the political tricks of the leaders without questioning the authenticity of the promises made to them. Promises of socio-economic benefits can easily lure the votes of illiterate poor. It may not be wrong to say that most of the illiterate poor take decision to vote mainly based on election campaign during the election and normally they act by conforming to their relatives and neighbours. In this connection, Ceylon Howard Wriggins stated “Since the mass of voters tend to retain their affiliation within the plural society, their political behaviour is defined more by the group which they traditionally belong than by their action as individuals in response to specific issue of policy”.

Caste and Religion is another main determinant of voting behaviour. Caste and religion occupies a significant place in the Indian politics. Caste and religion centric politics still dominate Indian politics. It has been an integral part and a way of personifying one’s identity in its socio-political life. Every person, irrespective of socio-economic status, literacy or attitude is bound by emotional attachment with the religion and caste they belong. Religion is another pull down factor of Indian electoral politics. Religion has mostly divided India into many watertight compartments rather than uniting people. Fundamentalists have taken political mileage of the situation by wooing people belonging to a specific religion and infused the poison of communalism in the electoral psychology. Many religion-based political parties in India such as- All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Bajrang Dal, Muslim League, Shiv Sena, etc. have been capable of winning votes of the majority Muslims and Hindus in the local, regional and national level.

Again, “the group aspects of voting behaviour become clearer when one enter into complex world of caste and faction. Many of the local influential who, to a considerable extent, control voting as well as other forms of behaviour, are leaders of ascriptive group”.<sup>222</sup> Caste-based voting in both the local and regional politics is widely known and common practice in every State of India. People always prefer to cast their votes in favour of the candidate belonging to the same caste. Today, caste-based politics in India has become a common tendency in every society. Sometimes the voters knowingly or unknowingly avoid the more eligible candidate simply to vote the

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<sup>222</sup>Norman D. Palmer (1976): Ibid. p- 279

candidate belonging to their own caste because of their emotional attachment. Regionalism emerged as key determinant of voting behaviour in India since 1990's. Demanding separate State and promoting regional interest have been strategies of politicians to capture the vote bank. It encourages politics of separatism. Identity politics centring on language and culture is an example of such politics. Its impact is prominent both in the State politics as well as National politics.

Political awareness is another major determinant of voting behaviour. Awareness of people about political affairs of their State, political leaders and electoral system helps them to take right decision in voting. Only the aware person about the political scenario of the State and rationally capable of reasoning and judging the political leaders can cast their vote in fair manner. Political consciousness of a person develop from different sources like- proper education system, habit of reading newspapers and watching news channel regularly and by different political awareness programmes. Political awareness among general people in India is lower in compared to the developed countries. Women' in particular are found more casual in case of casting votes in the rural areas and it mainly happens due to lack of education.

Most of the persons in rural normally exercise the voting simply as formal duty, some to prove themselves as a permanent residence of the place and sometimes because of motivation by the campaign of political leaders and party members. Some women votes simply on the basis of decision taken by the male heads of their families. One does not have to be conscious of the social basis of voting in rural India as of all other political and social activities. Even when appears to be individual and not family collective action, the voter is still functioning within a given social system and obviously is greatly affected by folkways and more of that system, whether he or she realizes this or not".<sup>223</sup> In urban too, women who are involved mostly in the household activities normally don't take political issues seriously. Their selections of candidates for voting are sometimes decided by their spouse or other male members of the families. But, the working women naturally tend to be more aware of and concerned about politics. Men in urban are generally tend to be aware about the political issues because they know the pros and cons of the affairs of different politicians or leaders.

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<sup>223</sup>Norman D. Palmer (1976): Ibid. p- 279 (1976) p.280



Family environment also determines the voting behaviour. It is universally recognized that family environment is the first and foremost important element of shaping one's character and psychology. Family is the smallest and the primary unit of society from where one acquires its basic social, cultural, economic and religious principles including ethics of one's life. In politics, the thinking and ideology behind supporting a political party and the political leader normally develops from the soils of the family and its members.

Media and exposures is another determinant factor of voting behaviour. Both the electronic and print media plays a vital role to motivate the people during elections. They disseminate the people for developing the socio-political knowledge. It helps a person to become responsible and conscious citizen. Reading newspapers and watching news channels regularly informs and updated a person about the politics of the State as well as the country. Only the informed citizen updated with political knowledge and activities of a State can take sensible and right decisions in voting.

Age is another determinant factor of political behaviour. Decision of choosing the candidates for voting may vary among different age groups of voters. Young voter's way of looking and approach to politics is more likely to differ and so affect their criteria for choosing the candidates for vote.<sup>224</sup>

Above mentioned factors are equally responsible for determining the voting behaviour of the people. All the people of society are related to these factors directly or indirectly. But, in some societies the social determinant are more decisive and in some others the economic factors are more effective in case of voting. In a vast and diverse country like India which is home to multi-linguistic, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religion is likely to be affected on many counts by different socio-economic, faith, caste, sex and many other factors. As such, the political behaviour of different ethnic groups catches the eyes of the people in India. The State of Assam for such ethnically diverse is often called as mini-India in itself is no exception to these problems. Among, all the ethnic groups, the Bodos are the largest ethnic community in Assam. In this light, the study of various determinants of voting behaviour of the Bodos in particular and the people of BTAD in general will enable to understand the formation of electoral and political processes.

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<sup>224</sup>G.S Halappa (1966): Dilemmas of Democratic Politics in India, Bombay: P.C. Manaktale and Sons.p.58

## 5.4 AN ANALYSIS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN BTAD ELECTIONS

Election system is the pillar of Indian democracy. The system consists of various levels of elections- the Lok Sabha, the State Legislative Assembly and Territorial Council election in the Sixth Schedule areas of North East India. Voting behaviour' of the people are generally tends to vary in different types of election. Most interesting question about the election is not only concerned with the victory of a contesting candidate but also with such questions as to why people vote the way' they do or what are the implications of the results.

Works on election study have dealt with a wide variety of factors which influences the voter's mind in the exercise of their right to vote. Besides the standard SES factors ideas and aspirations of the voter, the values he cherishes and the political considerations he makes find expression in his decision to cast vote for a particular candidate. According to Norman Palmer, among political factors influencing voting behaviour, three conventionally emphasised factors are the candidate orientation, the issue orientation and the party identification of the voter.<sup>225</sup> In this connection a number of works have studied the influence of the political factors in voting behaviour of the Indian electorate. In Northeast India, two studies were conducted to examine the factors influencing the voting behaviour of the people of the region. An ICSSR Project conducted by SK Chaube made an attempt to highlight certain aspects of voting determinants in the region covering five States and two Union Territories. Another study was conducted by B. Dutta Ray covering Meghalaya.<sup>226</sup>

This part of the chapter intends to highlight the voting behaviour of the people of the BTAD in the elections from the period "2004 to 2016" specifically held for the Lok Sabha, Assam Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Member of Council Legislative Assembly within the boundaries of the BTAD area. This chapter is the pivot of the study because the title of the study is pin pointedly related to the subject matter of voting behaviour of the people of BTAD. Here, the different dimensions of voting

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<sup>225</sup>Norman D. Palmer (1978), *Election and Political Development: The South Asian Experience*, New Delhi: Vikas, p-272

<sup>226</sup>Dr. KM Deka, Dr. MN Das, Dr. ANS Ahmed, Dr. NL Dutta, Dr. T Lahon, (1987): *Election Politics in Assam*, p-171

behaviour of voters of the study area' BTAD have been analysed to draw the inferences of voting behaviour of the people of BTAD.

Theoretical analysis revealed that various SES factors like education, income, caste, religion, family environment, political consciousness, age, social status etc. plays a vital role in determining the voting behaviour of the people in India. In this light, the researcher has attempted to analyse different socio-economic variables and political perspectives of sample survey to examine the voting behaviour of the people in BTAD.

#### 5.4.1 ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES OF BTAD

The study was conducted in four districts of BTAD viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. BTAD area comprises of 40 BTCLA seats, 12 ALA seats and 1 Parliamentary seat falling fully under the BTAD. The Parliamentary seat falling fully under the BTAD area is No. 5 Kokrajhar Constituency reserved for ST. The ALA constituencies falling fully under the BTAD area are Gossaogaon, Kokrajhar West & Kokrajhar East, Sidli, Bijini, Barama, Chapaguri, Bhabanipur, Kalaigaiaon, Udalguri, Paneri and Masbat. The 40 constituencies of the BTCLA are shown in the table 5.4

**Table: 5.4.1 Electoral Constituencies of BTC**

Co./No	Constituency	Category	Co./No	Constituency/No	Category
1	Porbotjhora	ST	21	Salbari	ST
2	Guma	OPEN	22	Koklabari	ST
3	Srirampur	NST	23	Dihira	OPEN
4	Jomduar	ST	24	Mushalpur	ST
5	Saraibil	ST	25	Baganpara	ST
6	Kuchugaon	ST	26	Darangajuli	ST
7	Fakiragram	NST	27	Nagriajuli	NST
8	Dotma	ST	28	Goibari	ST
9	Banargaon	ST	29	Suklai Serphang	ST
10	Debargaon	ST	30	Goreswar	ST
11	Baokungri	ST	31	Kwirabari	ST
12	Salakati	ST	32	Bhergaon	ST
13	Chirang	ST	33	Nanoi Serphang	NST
14	Chirang Duar	ST	34	Kaling Duar	ST
15	Kajolgaon	ST	35	Mwdwibar	OPEN
16	Nishima	ST	36	Harshinga	ST
17	Subhaijhar	ST	37	Dhanshiri	ST
18	Manas Serphang	ST	38	Bhairabkunda	ST
19	Thuribari	OPEN	39	Pasnwi Serfang	NST
20	Mothanguri	OPEN	40	Rowta	ST

**Source: Statistical Hand Book of BTC, 2011**

## 5.4.2 SAMPLING PROFILE

Keeping in mind the main aspects and determining factors of voting behaviour- the questionnaire was carefully designed to find out the variables and indicators of voting behaviour of the people in BTAD region. The researcher has collected 400 samples from 4 districts of BTAD i.e. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. Each district covers 100 respondents of 55:45 ratios representing both male and female from 4 distinct communities namely Bodo, Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi in the study area. The data collected from primary sources has been analysed in this chapter. Survey has been conducted with the structured questionnaire interview method based on stratified random sampling technique. Different sets of questionnaire have also been sent to NGOs, Student Unions and Civil Society Organizations relating to their voting preferences.

**Table: 5.4.2 Indicating Samples collected from four districts of BTAD**

Numbers of Samples = 400		DISTRICTS				PC %
		Kokrajhar	Chirang	Baksa	Udalguri	
Age Group	18 - 30	20	20	20	20	20%
	31 - 45	35	35	35	35	35%
	46 - 60	35	35	35	35	35%
	60 Above	10	10	10	10	10%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sex	Male	55	55	55	55	55%
	Female	45	45	45	45	45%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Caste	Bodo	25	25	25	25	25%
	Adivasi	25	25	25	25	25%
	Muslim	25	25	25	25	25%
	Rajbangsi	25	25	25	25	25%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Religion	Hindu	60	60	60	60	60
	Muslims	25	25	25	25	25
	Christianity	15	15	15	15	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey**

Further, each 100 samples are break-up into ratio in accordance with the number of voters into age groups, sex, caste and religion. The ratios of different determinants of voting behaviour are equally distributed in all the four districts. Based on the number of electors in gender wise the ratio has been distributed into 55:45 for male and female.

## 5.5 AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

It is known fact that the voting behaviour of a person or voters are conditioned and influenced by the interplay of various factors and variables of the surrounding environment. And, one of the most vital determinant factors of the voters is socio-economic background of the voters. Especially, in a democracy of the third world country like India where a vibrant social and economic groups constitutes a vital formation of electors and has been playing a decisive role in electing the Government becomes a desirable to understand the core essence and subject matter of socio-economic background of the voters to understand the complex interplay of different socio-economic variables in changing, deciding and shaping the preferences and choices of the voters in the elections.

**Table: 5.5 Social Backgrounds of the Respondents**

BTAD		Education					Mother Tongue				Marital Status			
		Illiterate	Read & Write	HSLC	HS	Graduate	PG & Above	Assamese	Bodo	Bengali	Adivasi	Married	Unmarried	Widowed
SEX	Male	28	59	51	39	27	16	63	55	47	55	147	48	7
	Female	43	48	42	28	12	7	56	45	34	45	171	16	11
Total		<b>71</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>79.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4.5</b>
Caste wise Educational background of Respondents														
Education		Illiterate		Literate						PC %				
		Nos. Of Respondents		Read & Write	HSLC	HS	Graduate	PG & Above						
Bodo		14		19	24	19	14	10	<b>86</b>					
Adivasi		27		40	19	9	4	1	<b>73</b>					
Muslim		21		29	22	16	8	4	<b>79</b>					
Rajbangsi		9		19	28	23	13	8	<b>91</b>					
Avg. % (PC)		<b>17.75</b>		<b>26.75</b>	<b>23.25</b>	<b>16.75</b>	<b>9.75</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>82.25</b>					

**Source: Field Survey**

The table 5.5 shows the social background of the respondents of the study areas, the BTAD. Education is a vehicle of transforming society and considered to be one of the most vital in developing the conscious political behaviour and rational attitudes among the citizens. Political education and learned citizens of a country is considered to be the utmost important condition for the healthy and successful democracy. Indian

democracy in its existence of seven decades had experiences shifting in the patterns of voting behaviour gradually with the growing progressive education among the citizens empowered by the political awareness widely in the urban India. But, the large part of rural India still remains political scapegoat which is sabotaging the progressive democracy due to lack of political education among the country folk. Like most part of rural India the BTAD regions of Assam is no exception towards education and political consciousness. Moreover, the region is densely populated by the tribal populations and other backward caste population which remain deprived and exploited for ages with no proper access to education. The study revealed that 17.75% of the respondents were illiterate. Amongst, the 17.75%, the percentage of illiterate among the Bodo stood at 14%, and 9% among Rajbangsi had a lower rate of illiterate persons whereas the Adivasi and Muslims stood higher in numbers of illiterate persons in the study areas with 27% and 21% respectively. Again, the literate with minimum standard having been able to read and write with no academic degree constitutes 26.75% are largely belong to the 50 to 60 above age groups. While the number of respondents with HSLC passed constitute 23.75% and majority of them belong to 45 - 55 age group. The HS pass constitute 16.75% mostly belong to the youth and middle aged group. While the graduate and post graduate sections constitute the least in numbers with 9.75% and 5.75% respectively are dominantly belong to the youth and new generation voters of 18 – 40 age group. The literate among male is relatively higher than the female counterpart. The literate among male was 87.27% against 76.11% of female. In case of literate among different caste group respondents, the percentage of literate among Rajbangsi stood higher than all other categories with 91% against 86% of Bodo, 73% of Adivasi and 79% among Muslims respectively.

The region also shares a linguistic diversity like other parts of India and is home to different linguistic groups like Bodo, Assamese, Bengali, Adivasi and other tribal dialects. The region has two official languages- Bodo and Assamese. The person with common language shares a common interest, values and emotions which constitutes significant factor in shaping the voting behaviour of the voters. In fact, the entire North Eastern regions including BTAD region has a shared history of language politics in the past. Unlike other parts of the country the linguistic nationalism has been strong decisive and divisive force in the North Eastern regions. Therefore, without overlooking

about the fact of the past history of language politics in Assam the importance of figuring out the compositions and strength of different linguistic groups in the region is desirable to understand the interplay of language in the politics of BTAD. So far as the use of mother tongue is concerned 29.7% speaks or uses Assamese as their first language; while 25% of the respondents uses Bodo and a sizeable numbers of 20.2% are Bengali speakers belong to Muslim group and the remaining 25% are Tea tribes of Adivasi groups living a sizeable numbers in BTAD areas.

Again, the social position and marital status of the voters have also considerable influence in shaping the voting behaviour and consolidating the attitudes and outlooks of a person towards politics relating to the choice and preferences of a candidate and political party. The pattern in the choice of candidate among married voters may differ from young unmarried and enthusiastic new generation voters. Again, in a male dominated Indian society the space of women in politics and decision making of its own in public and political life has been subject to question. In this respect the voting behaviour of married women is likely to be different from that of independent and unmarried women as their choice and preference may be subject to dictated by their spouse and family members. So far as this social groups is concerned majority of 79.5% were married against 16% unmarried respondents and 4.5% respondents were widowed.

## **5.6 AN ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Economy is the backbone of any State, society and the family and has direct and most profound implications in the electoral politics of a State. In fact, in modern day politics the economic conditions of a State determines and regulates the course of any level of politics- regional, national and international. The politics of progressive and sustainable economic development in all the States irrespective of big and small, rich and poor, developed or third world countries, Western or Eastern is the visible fact of the day and has become the most common and popular subject in power struggle or political games among the Statesmen of the world. It may not be wrong to argue that the voting behaviour is largely conditioned by the degree of economic prosperity of the voters which may by contrast vary from State to State and person to person. In a developing countries like India where the major chunk of population constitute lower

middle income groups, middle income groups, BPL groups, the peasant groups etc. the interplay of economic conditions of the voters in electoral politics is likely to be much higher in shaping the voting behaviours of the dominant and larger portion of the voters. The knowledge of economic scenario of the region and the voters is therefore desirable to enhance the understanding of various dimensions of economic implications on the political behaviour and dynamic patterns of voting behaviour of the people of different economic groups. As such, considering the significance of economic implications on the voting behaviour of the people, the researcher has made a study of economic background of the family of a respondent.

**Table: 5.6 Economic background of the respondent**

BTAD		Occupation								CASTE	Family Income (Per/Month)				
		Govt. Service	Private Service	Self Employed	Business	Student	Farmer	Unemployed	Wage Labor		Below 5000	5001-10000	10001-15000	15001-20000	Above 20000
SEX	Male	34	29	48	43	13	28	6	19	Bodo	19	41	12	11	17
	Female	23	17	24	21	7	39	15	34		Adivasi	32	46	10	6
<b>Total</b>		57	46	72	64	20	67	21	53	Muslim	21	49	14	04	12
Bodo		19	13	11	12	8	27	6	4	Raj-bangsi	12	33	23	14	18
Adivasi		6	7	19	13	3	13	9	30	<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>53</b>
Muslim		11	9	29	21	3	9	2	16	<b>Total%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42.2</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>13.5</b>
Rajbangsi		21	17	13	18	6	18	4	3						
PC %		14.2	11.5	18	16	5	16.7	5.2	13.2						

**Source: Field Survey**

In a table 5.6 the economic parameter of the family of a respondent is classified into different categories in accordance with the nature of their occupation and family income per month. The number of Govt. servant among the respondents is 14.2% which comprises the persons working at various grades. Majority of these respondents are working in IV grade and fewer in III grade and a handful of gazetted level officer. Among this category few respondents also work in fixed pay in different offices under BTC government. Most of the respondent of this category falls under the middle income group whose income per/month is above 20000 and constitutes around 13.5% of the total respondents. The study also comprises 11.5% respondents working in private sector companies, schools, colleges etc. and many of these respondents are young qualified aspirants of descent service. A sizable number of families of this group fall



under the lower middle income group of 15,000 to 20,000 per/month with a handful of them also sharing income group between 10000 -15000 per/month. The self-employed group is the majority among all the respondents with 18%. These are the family with no government service but engaged themselves in various nature of work like tailoring, weaving, crafting, mechanics, repairing, driving and perform multi-task as manual and skill work for their livelihood. Majority of this group fall under the income groups' between 5000-10000 per/month. The person engaged in small scale business and enterprises, shops, street vendors and others is 18% and major chunk of these families fall under the income group between 5000- 10000 per/month. A handful of them also share lower middle income group and middle income group depending upon the nature of their enterprise. The major chunk of the respondents is farmer and wage labourer which constitute 16.7% and 13.2% respectively and these groups fall under the lower most income group below 5000 per/month. These groups of families are categorically marginal farmers, farm labourers and share croppers whose livelihood largely depends on agricultural products and cropping. A sizeable numbers of the respondents also belong to daily wagers, factory workers, construction workers and tea workers. A number of these groups also share the income between 5000- 10000 per/month.

In a caste wise distribution of income groups, the study revealed that the average percentage of 21% respondents had a bare income below 5000 per/month and majority of 32% belong to Adivasi community followed by the Muslim group with 21% whereas the Bodo and Rajbangsi groups share 19% and 12% respectively. The study revealed that the income groups between 5000 -10000 per/month constitute the larger portion of the total respondents with an average 42.2%. In a caste wise distribution the Muslim in this group is 49% followed by the 46% Adivasi, whereas the Bodo and Rajbangsi share 41% and 33% respectively. The income group between' 10000-15000 per/month stood at an average 14.7%. In this category the Bodo constitute 12%, Adivasi with 10% stood in the bottom; while Muslim and Rajbangsi constitute 14% and 23% respectively. In a lower middle income group and upper middle income group the Bodo constitute 11% and 17% respectively; whereas the Adivasi group share 6% each in this group; while the Muslim share 4% and 12% respectively and the Rajbangsi share 14% and 18% respectively in this categories. From the above analyses it is revealed that the majority

of the voters belong to the lower most income group categories and a fewer percentage of voters sharing both lower middle income and upper middle income group.

## 5.7 AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONDENT'S POLITICAL AWARENESS

It is a known fact that the degree of successful working of democracy depends on the well informed citizen about their political rights as well as the day today political affairs of the State. In this respect, the print media like news paper, electronic media like news channel and other social media plays a vital role in making the citizens informed and alert about the political affairs of their State. To great extent, these media helps the voters to develop political ideas and perception about the political parties which are the main actors behind the engineering of political behaviour in a person. In modern day politics, the media like News paper, News Channel and Social media sells the political news through their active journalism like reporting and telecasting about the political events and stories in such a fascinating manner which not only catches the attention of the wider audiences but also plays the most influential role in shaping the voting behaviour, choices and preferences of the masses by creating a powerful and lasting political footprint in the mind of voters. Considering, the importance and role of media in politics an attempt has been made to explore this dimension.

**Table: 5.7 Determinants of the Political Awareness of the Respondents**

BTAD		Read News Paper				Electronic Media & News Channel				Use Social Media			
		Almost Daily	Some times	News paper Reader (%)	Don't Read News Paper	Almost Daily	Some times	Watch News on TV (%)	Don't Watch News	Almost Daily	Some times	Social Media User (%)	Don't Use
SEX	Male	9	98	48.6	113	107	96	92.27	17	53	76	58.6	91
	Female	0	39	21.6	141	69	86	86.11	25	26	49	41.6	105
CASTE													
Bodo		2	37	39	61	49	43	92	8	24	34	58	42
Adivasi		0	15	15	85	27	54	81	19	7	19	26	74
Muslim		2	31	33	67	42	49	91	9	19	38	57	43
Rajbangsi		5	54	59	41	58	36	94	6	29	34	63	37
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>89.50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Total % in BTAD</b>		<b>2.25</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>89.50</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>31.2</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>

Source: Field Survey

## **I. POLITICAL AWARENESS AND GENDER ORIENTATION**

In a gender wise, the study revealed that the percentage of news paper reading habit among male is comparatively higher than the female which constitute 48.6% and 21.6% respectively. It is also revealed that the regular news paper reader is barely 2.25% against that of 37.2% respondents reading news paper sometimes. The average percentage of the news paper readers is 36.5% against 63.5% respondent of the non-reader of news paper. However, in case of electronic media and news channel, the overwhelming average 89.50% respondents watch news out of which 92.27% are male against 86.11% female; while the least 10.5% barely watch or do not watch news. The average percentage of respondent watches news regular is 44% against 45.5% of the respondents who watches sometimes only. In this section also the male counterpart watches news regular is higher than the women. From this point of view, it may be stated that the women are least conscious about the political affairs of the region.

## **II. POLITICAL AWARENESS AND CASTE ORIENTATION**

In a caste wise, the 59% among the Rajbangsi group reads news paper followed by the 39% Bodo group; whereas, the Muslim and Adivasi groups have 33% and 15% respectively. The reason for such low percentage of news paper reading habit is mainly because of illiterate and non-availability of news paper circulation in the rural areas. In case of electronic media, the 92% of the respondents among Bodos watches news either regular or sometimes. Among all the caste groups Adivasi has the least 81% respondents who watch news either regularly or sometimes. While the Muslim and Rajbangsi in this group constitute 91% and 94% respectively. Apparently, the electronic media is the most popular medium among all sections and age groups in BTAD. This indicates that the electronic media has reached to the rural BTAD. Though, the overwhelming majority of the respondents watch news does not indicate the political consciousness in true sense of the term because the majority among them watch news occasionally or sometimes only.

## **III. SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media in recent years has become an open platform and a very powerful medium, connecting people globally of all ages and genders where one can shares their

political opinions through active participation. It has become the most popular and widely used common platform today among youths in particular and all age groups of people in general especially in urban areas. In this respect, the majority of the respondents belonging to the age group above 45 years had hardly access to the social media. The respondent using social media either regular or sometimes together constitute 51% which are mostly youths and comprising of few handful middle age groups. While 49% of the respondents do not use social media are mostly farmers and daily wagers or either illiterate or just can read and write. In a caste wise category, the Adivasi group has the least 26% who have access to social media either regularly or sometimes. While the other three groups share almost equal percentage in which the Bodo constitute 58%, the Muslim and Rajbangsi share 57% and 63% each respectively. It may be stated that the Social media is not very popular among all the section of people in BTAD. It is popular and widely used only by the least number of people especially by the new generation voters, youth and highly educated section of people.

## **5.8 AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Keeping in mind the popular belief that the existence of healthy democracy depends on the level of popular participation in the electoral politics the researcher has enquire about the participation of the respondents in the political events like electoral campaign, political mass gathering, public rally organised by the Political Parties during elections. Although, the political participation of the masses always doesn't give accurate results of the elections and so is not always a reliable determinant of the political and voting behaviour of the people. But a considerable number of political analyst and psephologist use the political participation of the masses as one of the tool to predict the election results and have asserted so to be one of the most important determinant factors of voting behaviour of the people.

### **I. GENDER WISE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BTAD**

In gender wise, it is apparent from the table 5.8 that the number of male participants as a party member and active supporter is higher than the women. The active members and party supporters are quite less in both genders. From the table it is

apparent that the majority respondents of both the genders are audience and takes part in the political campaign and meeting sometimes only. The numbers of rare/passive participant are higher among women than the male. This indicates that the women are least conscious and least interested in the political affairs than the male.

**Table: 5.8 Level of Political Participation of the Respondents**

BTAD		Political Participation			Frequency of participation			If not active participants		
		Audience	Party Member	Supporter	Active	Some Times	Rarely	Not Interested	Make no difference	Others
SEX	Male	159	23	38	67	116	37	54	77	21
	Female	147	9	24	27	82	71	72	69	13
CASTE	Bodo	61	14	25	34	47	19	17	43	6
	Adivasi	81	5	14	21	55	24	28	43	8
	Muslim	86	3	11	16	45	39	39	36	9
	Rajbangsi	78	10	12	23	51	26	42	24	11
Total		<b>306</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>34</b>
PC %		76.5	8	15.5	23.5	49.5	27	31.5	36.5	8.5

**Source: Field Survey**

## II. CASTE WISE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BTAD

In caste wise, it was found that the party members and active supporters are quite higher among Bodo than the three other caste groups. Among the Rajbangsi group the party members and active supporters are sizable numbers. The Muslim and Adivasi have relatively higher number of rare/passive participants than the other two groups. In the field study it was found that most of the young educated Bodo youths are either directly or indirectly associated with the student organisation of the region are supporter of the political parties and candidates backed by the organisations.

## III. OVERALL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN BTAD

In respect of political participation, 76.5% of the respondents have participated in the electoral campaign and mass gathering as an audience in the elections. While 8% among respondents turn out to be the working party member at different level affiliated to different political parties and organisations most of which are associated with the

grass root level party workers; whereas, 15.5% have no party designation but have participated as a party supporter. The study also revealed that the average 23.5% are the active participants out of which the number of male is higher than the female participant. Whereas, the major chunk of the respondents with 49.5% are not active participant but are the participant selective towards the political parties and organisations. The study also revealed that the 27% of the respondent rarely take parts in the electoral campaigns or mass gathering organised by the political parties.

Further, the researcher also enquired the reasons to the non-active participants. It revealed that the 31.5% of non-active participants are due to lack of interest in politics. For majority of them, the political parties sell lies and fake promises to the people in the name of electoral politics. The party sells same agenda and manifesto elections after elections but none of the promises have been fulfilled to the people of locality. The majority 36.5% feels that their participation in the electoral campaign and meeting doesn't make any difference or bring changes in their livelihood. For this group of people their presence in the electoral meeting doesn't bother or affect the party either but will affect their day to day livelihood. This category mostly belongs to the upper middle class and the least income groups. While 8% of the respondents have cited other reasons like defective and lack leadership quality, credibility of the political party, corrupt leader, communal and so on. As such, the following reasons have been the causes of non-involvement and political apathy among the large chunk of voters.

## **5.9 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BTAD**

As mentioned in the previous chapter that one of the main objectives for the creation of BTC was to bring rapid development in the region. It is a matter of fact that the BTAD region was among the most backward and neglected region prior to the creation of BTC. The creation of BTC gave high expectations among the people of BTAD towards rapid socio-economic transformation and infrastructural development and overall progress in the areas. Since, the development has a link with multi-dimensional aspects of socio-political and economic prospects and changes of the people. As such the development is also one of the vital factors that shape the political behaviour and voting behaviour of the people. In this respect, the researcher has

attempted to understand how far BTAD has able to stand in the expectation of the people. The researcher has attempted to explore the achievements of the BTAD administration through voter's prism about various infrastructural developments. Lack of basic infrastructures like road and communication system, medical and health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and living conditions have been the major problems prior to the creation of BTAD. Here, the researcher has taken these variables as the main indicator to understand the status of development and their relations with the voting behaviour of the people in BTAD.

### 5.9 Respondents view on Infrastructural Development in BTAD after the creation of BTC

BTAD		Post BTC & status of its improvement			Road and Communication system			Medical and Health Care			Educational Institutions			Economic & Living Conditions		
		Yes	No	Don't Know	Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Somewhat Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory
SEX	Male	163	48	9	71	82	67	42	87	91	82	91	47	52	91	77
	Female	104	54	22	57	94	29	49	81	50	64	76	40	44	54	82
CASTE																
Bodo		82	7	11	38	49	13	31	46	23	46	43	11	38	46	16
Adivasi		64	31	5	26	47	27	23	42	35	26	44	30	13	33	54
Muslim		63	29	8	31	43	26	17	39	44	37	39	24	26	36	38
Rajbangsi		58	35	7	33	37	30	20	41	39	37	41	22	19	30	51
Total		267	102	31	128	176	96	91	168	141	146	167	87	96	145	159
PC %		67	25.5	7.8	32	44	24	23	42	35.3	37	42	22	24	36	40

Source: Field Survey

## I. ISSUE ORIENTATION AND GENDER WISE VOTING PREFERENCE

Among male the majority 74.09% and 57.77% among women respondents have expressed that the basic infrastructure in BTAD has improved since its inception, whereas 21.81% among male and 28.88% among women respondents are not satisfied with the pace of development in BTAD. Among male 32.27% against that of 31.66% female respondent have expressed the satisfactory improvement in the road and communication system in BTAD. Again, 37.27% male and 52.22% women respondent argued that the present condition of the road and communication system is somewhat

satisfactory; while 30.45% male and 16.11% women respondent are not satisfied with the existing road and communication system.

In medical sector, 19.09% and 39.54% among male and 27.22% and 45% among female respondent have expressed improvement in satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory; whereas 41.36% among male and 27.77% among female are not satisfied with the present condition of the health sector in BTAD. In educational sector, 37.27% and 41.36% among male and 35.55% and 42.22% among female respondent have expressed improvement in satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory; whereas 21.36% among male and 22.22% among female are not satisfied with the education sector in BTAD. In matter of improvement in economic and living standard, 23.63% and 41.36% among male and 24.44% and 30% among female respondent have expressed that their economic condition have improved satisfactory and somewhat satisfactory; whereas, 35% among male and 45.55% among female are not satisfied with their economic condition.

## **II. ISSUE ORIENTATION AND CASTE WISE VOTING PREFERENCE**

The majority respondents among all the caste groups have expressed that the infrastructural changes and improvement have taken place in BTAD during 15 years of its administration. Notably, in the sectors of “Road and Communication”, “Medical and Health Care” and “Educational Institution” all the four caste groups’ shared almost alike opinion and evenly percentage of their satisfaction, somewhat satisfaction and dissatisfaction. However, in matter of improvement in economic condition, the satisfied respondents are little higher among Bodo group than other groups. Notably, the 38% and 46% of the respondents among Bodo expressed their satisfaction and somewhat satisfaction with the improvement of their living condition. While the higher number of unsatisfied respondents belong to the Adivasi and Rajbangsi groups with 54% and 51% each respectively.

## **III. OVERALL STATUS OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN BTAD**

The study revealed that the majority respondents with 67% have argued that the BTC is efficient and to considerable extent have been able to stand in the expectation of



the people as it has been able to achieve an overall improvement in the BTAD region. Notably, a considerable number of 25.5% of respondents have also argued that BTC has failed to bring any major development and changes in the socio-economic life of the people. While 7.8% respondents have no idea whether the BTC administration have failed or succeeded to stand in the expectations and hopes of the people.

It was a matter of fact that the road and communication system in rural areas of BTAD was in deplorable condition prior to the creation of BTC. Study revealed that the BTC administration has focused on the development of road and communication system in the areas. Study revealed that the BTC government in its three terms seemingly have worked for the improvement of the rural road connectivity as 32% of the respondents have expressed satisfaction with the present condition of road and communication system in the BTAD areas. The majority 44% are somewhat satisfied with the existing condition of the road and communication system in their locality, whereas 24% among the respondents are not satisfied with the road condition in their locality.

In modern days, the provisions for basic medical health care facilities have become one of the basic rights of the citizens. For the government, ensuring primary health care to the people of the rural areas has become one of the priorities and as such the improvements in health service have been one of the fundamental objectives of the government policies. In this sector, the least 23% respondents have expressed their satisfactory with the development in health sector and the performances of health service in the BTAD regions. The majority 42% expressed in “somewhat satisfied” with the existing conditions of the health services in BTAD areas; while almost equal numbers of 35.3% are not satisfied with the medical service of both rural health centres and civil hospitals in the districts of the BTAD.

In education sector, the four districts of BTAD are among the least performing in the States. In its 15 years of existence, the Council Government as per the BTC accord have able to persuade the Central Government to set up the higher technical institutes like- CIT and Engineering College in the region. The region has also lone University and has setup Medical College also and proposed to establish more numbers of higher educational institutions. So far as the conditions of the primary and upper primary schools are concerned the respondents have a mixed opinion varied from district to district. The study revealed that 37% of the respondents are satisfied and 42%

of the respondents are somewhat satisfied with the growing numbers of higher educational institutions in the region but 22% of them are not satisfied with the performances of the lower primary and upper primary level schools due to the reasons like- lack of teachers, lack of good infrastructure and so on.

In matter of economic conditions, the study revealed that the living standard of the large majority of 40% is not improved. However, the least 24% of the respondents have expressed satisfactory improvement in their living conditions while 36% of the respondents have expressed a little improvement in their living conditions.

From the above analysis, it may be stated that the BTC government has performed fairly well in the development of basic infrastructure of the region. Notably, the development is evenly benefited to all the section of people of BTAD irrespective of caste groups except that of rapid economic improvement and transformation.

## 5.10 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE BTC GOVERNMENT

Remarkably, the BTC government has been accused of rampant corruption by the public from time to time. The credibility of the BTC government by the general public in recent times has been questioned and came under serious allegation and criticism for corruption. It has also raised the eye balls of many conscious public of the areas. In this respect, the researcher has attempted to understand the true pictures of the BTC government through the eyes of voters.

**Table 5.10 Respondents view about the BTC Government.**

BTAD		Indicating Satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the respondents											
		Efficient			Corrupt			Accountability			Transparent		
		Good	Avg.	Poor	High	Avg.	Don't Know	Good	Avg.	Poor	Good	Avg.	Poor
SEX	Male	47	81	92	121	73	26	27	69	124	26	55	139
	Female	32	86	62	88	59	33	19	42	119	17	49	114
<b>Bodo</b>		32	46	22	39	48	13	21	32	47	27	37	36
<b>Adivasi</b>		14	40	46	51	26	23	11	29	60	9	24	67
<b>Muslim</b>		13	49	38	58	31	11	7	31	62	4	26	70
<b>Rajbangsi</b>		20	32	48	61	27	12	7	19	74	3	17	80
<b>Total</b>		<b>79</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>PC %</b>		19.7	41.8	39	52.3	33	15	11.5	27.8	60.8	10.8	26	63.3

Source: Field Survey

## **I. ISSUE ORIENTATION AND CASTE WISE VOTING PREFERENCE**

In a caste wise, the large majority 46%, 38% and 48% among the respondents of the respective groups- the Adivasi, the Muslim and the Rajbangsi argued that the BTC government is poor and not efficient. In case of corruption, 39% respondents among Bodo group argued that the BTC government is highly corrupt. Again, the 51%, 58% and 61% of the respondents among the respective groups of Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi have also argued the existence of high corruption in BTC. The large majority respondents among the Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi groups also argued that the accountability and transparency of the BTC government is poor.

## **II. OVERALL VIEWS OF RESPONDENTS ABOUT BTAD**

The study revealed that the least 19.7% respondents are satisfied with the BTC government. While, the majority with 41.8% of the respondent feels that BTC government is average; whereas, almost equal number of respondents with 39% feels that BTC government is poor and not efficient in delivering goods to the public. In respect of corruption, the majority with 52.3% respondents expressed that there is high corruption in the BTC government. While the 33% of the respondents argued that the corruptions exist but it is not as high as it is accused of being so; whereas 15% of the respondents either don't have idea or decline to share their opinion.

In respect of accountability, the BTC government fared very poor as the least 11.5% respondents think that BTC is accountable against that of 60.8% respondents labelling the BTC government unaccountable. While 27.8% among the respondent have argued that the accountability of the BTC government is average. Time and again, the transparency of BTC government has been subject of question by the conscious public. In this matter also, the BTC government fared very poor as the least 10.8% respondents think that the BTC government is transparent against that of 60.8% respondents labelling it as non-transparent. While 26% among the respondents have argued that the transparency of the BTC government is average. From the above analysis it may be stated that the BTC administration stand quite poor in matter of transparency and accountability but contrary to that a slight majority of the respondents also credited the Council administration as efficient.

## **5.11 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE VOTING CHOICE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The choice “to vote and not to vote” to a particular political party and candidate is a personal choice. In the electoral system of multi-party democracy, many candidates and political parties are likely to contest in the elections thereby giving the voters available options and choices to elect the one or reject the all among the given candidates and political parties and of its choice. It is a matter of fact that the choice and preferences of the voters defer from person to person and also subjected to be conditioned by various socio-economic, cultural and political factors of a person and the environment’ a person is living in. In this regard, the researcher has attempted to understand the motivating factors of the voters in making decisions and choices by exploring the preferences of voters belonging to different age groups and socio-economic background of the respondents.

### **5.11.1 AGE WISE VOTING PREFERENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The voting preference of the voters is likely to be determined by the age of the voters. Different age groups may have different outlook and approach about politics. Besides, the differences of aspirations, needs, political socialisation and overall political understanding among the different generations may be a motivating factor.

#### **I. AGE WISE VOTING PREFERENCE**

The table 5.11.1 indicate the voting preferences of the respondents according to the age wise. The respondents among” 18 – 30 age group constitute 24.25% of the total respondents. The study revealed that the majority 51.5% respondents of this age group prefer the regional parties of BTAD. While a sizeable number of 29% and 20% of the respondents prefer national parties and State parties respectively.

The respondent among 31-45 age group constitute 35.5% of the total respondents. Majority 38% respondents of this age group also preferred regional party (BTAD) mostly preferring BPF and fewer supporting to ABSU backed political party and other like ona- Bodo organisation ‘SJAM’. While a sizeable number of respondents with 25.4% and 30.3% preferred the national party and the State party respectively.

The respondent among 46-60 age group constitute 31.75% of the total respondents. The majority 39.4% respondents of this age group also preferred regional party (BTAD) mostly preferring BPF. While a sizeable number of respondents with 23% and 35.4% preferred the national party and the State party respectively.

The least number of respondents belong to the age group above 60. This group constitute 8.5% of the total respondents. In this group, 41% respondents favoured regional party (BTAD) whereas a significant number of 35% and 21% each favoured the State and national political parties respectively.

**Table: 5.11.1 Age wise voting preferences of the respondents**

BTAD		18 - 30 Years				31- 45 Years				46 - 60 Years				Above 60			
		National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others
SEX	Male	17	10	29	0	22	24	28	3	14	28	24	1	3	10	7	0
	Female	11	9	21	0	14	19	26	6	15	17	26	2	4	2	7	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CASTE</b>																	
Bodo		5	1	24	0	3	3	24	3	3	2	18	2	0	0	12	0
Adivasi		7	0	8	0	18	14	12	0	12	9	13	0	4	2	1	0
Muslim		12	11	8	0	6	7	11	2	8	16	10	0	3	5	0	1
Rajbangsi		4	7	10	0	9	19	7	4	6	18	9	1	0	5	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PC %</b>		<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2.9</b>

Source: Field Survey

## II. GENDER WISE VOTING PREFERENCE

Among 18-30 age groups, the number of respondents was 97 out of 400 respondents and of which 56 were male and 41 were female. The study revealed that the percentage of voting preferences among male in the categories- national and regional party (BTAD) are marginally higher than the female. In percentage wise, 30.35% and 51.78% among male preferred the national and the regional party (BTAD) against that of 26.82% and 51.21% female respectively; whereas, 21.95% women respondents preferred the State party against 17.85% male respondents.

Among 31-45 age groups, the number of respondents was 142 out of 400 respondents and of which 77 were male and 65 were female. The study revealed that the

percentage of voting preferences among male in the categories- National and State party is marginally higher than female. In percentage wise, 28.57% and 31.16% among male preferred the National and the State party against that of 25.13% and 29.23% female; whereas, 40% of the female respondent preferred regional party (BTAD) against that of 33.76% male.

Among 46-60 age groups, the number of respondent was 127 out of 400 respondents and of which 67 were male and 60 were female. The study revealed that the percentage of voting preferences among women in the categories- National and Regional party is marginally higher than male. In percentage wise, 41.79% among male preferred the State party against that of 28% female; whereas, 25% and 43.33% of the female respondent preferred the National and Regional party (BTAD) against that of 20.89% and 35.82% male.

Among all age group, the study revealed that the percentage of voting preferences among male and female is almost evenly polled to all categories- the National, the State and the Regional party (BTAD). Notably, a marginally higher 44.44% among women respondents preferred the Regional party (BTAD) against that of 40% male; whereas, a marginally higher 32.72% male preferred the State party against women.

### **III. CASTE WISE VOTING PREFERENCES**

Among 18-30 age groups, the majority among the Bodos prefer the regional party of BTAD' majorly either BPF or ABSU back political party and fewer preferring the National party. The BPF has also support base among handful of the Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi groups. In this age group, among Muslims the supporter of the National and the State party' mainly- the INC and AIUDF are higher than rest of the group.

Among 31-45 age groups, the majority among the Bodo voters choose regional party mostly the BPF and ABSU back party; while a considerable numbers of Adivasi and Muslim voters also supported the BPF. In this age group, majority of the Adivasi voters preferred the National party and the State party. The majority of Rajbangsi group preferred the State party with sizeable number also leaning their support to the National party. The Muslim votes scattered almost evenly to all the three major parties.

Among 46-60 age groups also, the majority among the Bodo voters choose regional party mostly the BPF and ABSU back party. Among this group, a considerable number of Adivasi and Muslim voters also supported the BPF. In this category, the Adivasi voters preferred evenly to almost all the parties- the National, the State and the Regional (BTAD). While the higher number among the Muslim and the Rajbangsi voter preferred the State party and a fewer leaning their supports to the National party. Among the 60 above age group, the Bodo voters preferred the Regional Party (BTAD); while the Muslim and the Rajbangsi groups favoured the State parties.

In aggregate, the study of different categories of age group revealed that the majority of the respondents preferred the regional political party over the National and State parties is mainly due to the fact that the regional party like BPF have still significant and well knitted social bases among different caste groups. And notably, among all the age groups, the Independent candidates are less favoured until the candidate is not backed by the influential social organisations of the region like the ABSU and other. It may be mentioned that the Kokrajhar Parliamentary Constituency has been mostly occupied by the Independent candidates in the past prior to the formation of BPF was mostly backed by the influential organisation like ABSU.

### **5.11.2 INCOME WISE VOTING PREFERENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS**

The economic background of the family is a significant factor that influences the decision, choices and preferences of the voters. Considering its influential role in decision making, choices and preferences the researcher has attempted to investigate the voting choice and preferences of different categories of economic and income backgrounds. The researcher has classified the respondents into various income groups based on their income per/month.

#### **I. INCOME WISE VOTING PREFERENCE**

In the income group below 5000 per/month, the majority of 42.8% respondents favoured the regional party of BTAD of which majority of them favouring the BPF. While the 32% and 25% respondents among this income group also supported the National and the State party. Among the total respondents, the majority respondents

belong to the income group between “5001- 10000” per/month. This group constitute lower income group. The study revealed that the majority 42% of this group favoured regional party; whereas, 25.4% and 29.6% of the respondent preferred the National and the State Party respectively. Among the lower middle income group between ‘10001- 15000’ per/month, the majority 42.3% respondent preferred the regional party of BTAD. Majority of them favoured the BPF and fewer of them also favoured the ABSU backed political party. The 27.1% each among the respondents favoured the National Party and the State Party respectively. Among, the middle income group also, the majority 40.9% respondents favoured the Regional Party of BTAD. The supporter of the National and the State Party in this category is 15.9% and 36.3% each respectively.

The study revealed that the Regional Party is more popular than the State and the National Party among the voters across income groups. Notably, the Regional Party was evenly supported by almost all the category of income groups.

**Table: 5.11.2 Income wise voting preferences of the respondents**

BTAD	Below 5000				5001- 10000				10001-15000				15001-20000 & Above- 20000			
	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others	National Party	State Party	Regional Party (BTAD)	IND & Others
<b>Bodo</b>	1	0	18	0	5	4	29	3	1	0	9	2	4	2	21	1
<b>Adivasi</b>	14	7	11	0	19	12	15	0	7	1	2	0	1	5	6	0
<b>Muslim</b>	8	10	3	0	13	19	16	1	5	3	6	0	3	7	4	2
<b>Rajbangsi</b>	4	4	4	0	6	15	11	1	3	12	8	0	6	18	5	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PC %</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>40.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>

Source: Field Survey

## II. CASTE WISE VOTING PREFERENCE

Among income group below 5000’ the majority among the Bodo group favoured the Regional Party mostly the BPF. The Regional Party’ BPF has also significant support of this income group belonging to Adivasi community; although, the majority of the Adivasi preferred the National party. While the Muslims support in this group show inclining more towards the State and the National Party. Notably, the Rajbangsi



groups favoured evenly to all the parties. Among the income group “5001-10000” per/month, the majority among the Bodo group favoured the regional party of BTAD. Majority of them favoured the BPF and a sizable numbers of them also favoured the ABSU backed political party. While a considerable number of respondents belonging to the Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi also supported the BPF and among them fewer favoured other regional party like SJAM. Notably, a large chunk of the respondents belonging to the Adivasi, Muslim and the Rajbangsi in this category favoured the State Party. Again, a considerable number of the Adivasi and the Muslim in this category also preferred the National Party. Among the income group “10001- 15000” per/month, majority of the Bodo voters preferred the BPF and ABSU backed political party. While a good number of Adivasi and Muslim voters show their support to the National Party and fewer of them supporting the BPF. The majority of the Rajbangsi group share their support to the State Party and fewer of them supporting the Regional party like- the BPF and SJAM. Among the income group’ 15001 – above 20000” per/month, the majority among the Bodo favoured the Regional Party most of them favouring the BPF and fewer of them favoured the ABSU back party. Among the Adivasi and Muslim groups the respondents favoured evenly to both the Regional and the State Party. The majority of Rajbangsi group favoured the State Party.

The study revealed that the BPF is the most dominant Regional Party which still enjoys considerable popularity and acceptance among the voters across different income groups and among different caste groups. While the popularity of the National and State Party is also not far behind. It may be stated that the popularity of these party is growing in BTAD region can be seen as an alternative party to BPF which is potential threat and challenge to the political supremacy of BPF. The independent candidates are least popular and unlikely to draw public supports until it is backed by the influential social organisation of the region.

## **5.12 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE- “FACTORS MOTIVATING THE VOTER’S VOTING DECISION”**

Question of voting decision and choice of candidates for voters is another important aspect to be understood because the voting decision and choice of candidates is likely to be motivated by many factors. It is known fact that the decision and choices

of the voters in elections is motivated by various socio-economic, political-cultural values and personal traits of the candidates. Voting behaviour is motivated by many seen and unseen factors. In this respect several motivating factors were put in the option and the respondents were allowed to opt from the given options displayed in the table.

**Table: 5.12 Factors motivating the voting decision/choice of candidate**

BTAD		Religion	Caste	Sex	Political Party	Political Alliance	Role of Community Leaders	Political experience & performance	Personality & leadership	Manifesto & Campaign	Any Other
SEX	Male	3	9	1	118	21	16	5	37	10	0
	Female	4	13	0	109	0	11	11	19	13	0
Bodo		0	4	0	69	0	11	2	13	1	0
Adivasi		0	9	0	48	6	9	9	8	11	0
Muslim		5	7	1	51	7	0	3	18	8	0
Rajbangsi		2	2	0	59	8	7	2	17	3	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>PC %</b>		<b>1.75</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>56.75</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>6.75</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>0</b>

**Source: Field Survey**

The study revealed that the most influential factor in selection of the candidate for the voters is Political Party. Overwhelming 56.75% majority respondents share that they vote for the Political Party. Other factors like religion and sex are bothered least to the voters. However, a sizable numbers of 14% respondents shared that they were motivated by the personality of the candidates. Other factors like Caste, Political alliance, Community service, Political experiences and performances, manifesto and campaign of the candidates seemingly bothered least to the voters. It may be argued that the political party is the fundamental motivating factor to the voters. The majority of the voters primarily votes the candidate based on its party affiliation over other factors like personality and performances of the candidates.

### **5.13 AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOTING PATTERN OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE ELECTIONS FROM “2004 to 2016”**

Electoral politics in BTAD are held for three formats- BTC election, Assam Assembly Election and the Parliamentary Election. These elections are held in three successive years. Since, the formation of BTC to till date three times each for Lok

Sabha, BTC and Assam Assembly Election has been held. Here, the researcher has attempted to investigate the voting pattern of all three formats of the elections held in BTAD areas since the inception of BTC in 2003 to till 2016.

**Table: 5.13.1 Voting pattern of the respondents in the given elections**

BTAD	LOK SABHA ELECTION- 2004				BTC ELECTION- 2005				ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION- 2006				
	ABSU (Back Party)	Other	National Party (INC)	IND	BPPF (H)	BPPF (R) ABSU (Back Party)	IND/Others	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	National Party	IND/Others	
SEX													
<b>Male</b>	89	8	13	38	127	29	7	68	38	41	8	12	
<b>Female</b>	68	14	25	21	97	14	12	59	16	27	16	23	
<b>CASTE</b>													
<b>Bodo</b>	71	0	0	0	64	6	3	43	39	0	2	0	
<b>Adivasi</b>	29	5	18	12	54	27	0	32	9	17	12	4	
<b>Muslim</b>	36	5	11	21	57	7	4	26	6	27	9	8	
<b>Rajbangsi</b>	21	12	9	26	49	3	12	26	0	24	1	23	
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	
<b>PC %</b>	<b>56.8</b>	<b>7.97</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>78.3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6.64</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>7.79</b>	<b>11.4</b>	

**Source: Field Survey**

## **I. VOTING PATTERN OF BTAD ELECTIONS - 2004, 2005 & 2006**

It may be mentioned that the No. 5 Kokrajhar Parliamentary Constituency falls fully under the BTAD areas and it is reserved for ST. The seat has been occupied by the Bodo candidates for most of the terms. In 2004 Lok Sabha Election an independent candidate backed by the ABSU and supported by the BJP retained the No. 5 Kokrajhar Constituency with the highest margin of votes in the State. The study revealed that the overwhelming 56.8% of the respondent have polled in favour of ABSU backed Independent candidate. The Congress, IND and other candidates performed poorly.

In subsequent year, the first BTC election was held in 2005. The new chapter of political history of Bodos also began with the Council election in 2005. Notably, the electoral battle was fought between the newly formed political parties- BPPF (H) led by former BLT Chief and BPPF (R) led by former ABSU President. The study revealed that the overwhelming 78.3% majority of the respondents have voted the BPPF (H).

The study revealed that the BPF secured majority support from the voters in 2006 State Assembly election. Majority 41.2% respondent shared that they have supported BPF in 2006 Assam Assembly elections also. The ABSU backed candidate

and other State and National Party contesting against the BPF failed to perform satisfactorily in the region. With this convincing victory in the western Bodo dominated areas the BPF emerged a dominant political party of the region. As a matter of fact, the BPF become a Kingmaker in this election. Since then, the BPF emerged a strong political force in the region. The BPF had a successful run in these elections. The party rose to popularity continues to enjoy the support of different caste groups in the region.

## **II. VOTING PATTERN AND GENDER ORIENTATION**

In a field study, it was found that the total number of 276 respondents cast their vote out of 400 in 2004 Parliamentary Election and out of them 53.62% was male and 46.37% were female. Among male respondents majority of 60.13% voted to ABSU backed Independent candidate whereas, 53.12% women expressed to have voted to the ABSU backed Independent candidate in Parliamentary Election from the No. 5 Kokrajahar Constituency. In 2005 BTC Election, both the male and female voters absolutely voted to the BPF. In 2006 Assam Assembly Election, 308 respondents cast their votes and out of them 167 were male and 141 were female. Among male 40.71% against 41.84% female voted to BPF; whereas, ABSU backed party and State party also got sizable numbers of votes from the male respondents.

## **III. VOTING PATTERN AND CASTE ORIENTATION**

In 2004 Parliamentary Election, notably the ABSU backed candidate able to secured votes from all the caste groups. A sizable number of Muslim and Adivasi voters have voted National Party; whereas, a considerable numbers of voters from Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi also voted to other Independent Candidate. In 2005 BTC Election, the BPPF (H) secured overwhelming support from all the caste groups. In 2006 Assam Assembly Election, the Bodo voters got polarised evenly with one group favouring BPF and the other favouring ABSU backed party. The sizable numbers of Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi notably have supported the State Party. The sizable number of Adivasi polled to the National Party also. The study also revealed that the Rajbangsi votes polarised into the Independent candidate and others. From the above analyses, it is clear that the BPF won the elections due to its inclusive policy and ideology. Because of such inclusive policy the party was able to keep its support base of various social groups intact in these elections.

**Table: 5.13.2 Voting pattern of the respondents in the given elections**

BTAD	LOK SABHA ELECTION- 2009			BTC ELECTION- 2010					ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION- 2011				
	BPF	ABSU Back (IND)	State Party (AGP)	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	National Party	IND/Others	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	National Party	IND/Others
Male	99	51	42	112	38	16	13	22	78	38	42	13	28
Female	74	38	33	87	24	9	19	19	64	24	27	22	17
<b>CASTE</b>													
<b>Bodo</b>	39	48	0	57	37	8	0	0	53	41	0	0	0
<b>Adivasi</b>	57	14	13	58	13	0	11	2	39	12	9	14	13
<b>Muslim</b>	42	16	24	43	9	0	16	17	27	9	31	12	6
<b>Rajbangsi</b>	35	11	38	41	3	17	5	22	23	0	29	9	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>PC %</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8.91</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>8.75</b>	<b>11.3</b>

Source: Field Survey

## I. VOTING PATTERN OF BTAD ELECTIONS - 2009, 2010 & 2011

It may be mentioned that the 2009, Lok Sabha election was mainly fought between the three parties. The BPF, ABSU backed candidate and the AGP. Remarkably, the BPF has been a strong contender in this Parliamentary election also. The BPF, a coalition partner of Congress government at the State had a support of Congress in the BTAD region. While, the ABSU backed candidate was supported by the BJP and the AGP fought the battle on its own. The study revealed that the majority of 43.3% voters polled in favour of BPF. The BPF managed to get the support of different communities and able to retained the seat. The ABSU backed candidate managed to pull the majority of the Bodo voters; however, the party failed to get a good chunk of support from the cross communities. The AGP candidate though had a handful of supporter among the cross communities but the party also failed to make any significant advancement in this election. The party was rejected by voters.

The successful run of BPF continued in the 2010 BTC election as the party return to power with thumping majority. Study revealed that the majority 55.4% voters have voted for the ruling BPF. The party continued its political dominance and popular support from the cross communities in the region as revealed in the study. The ABSU backed candidates failed to give a fair performance as it managed to win only a single

seat. However, the Congress' a coalition partner of BPF in the State also able to grab three seats in the Council election. While the "Other and IND" shared four seats.

The BPF continued their good performance in the BTAD region in 2011 Assam Assembly election also. It may be mentioned that the former Congress-BPF ally partner had no electoral alliance but had just tacit understanding. In many constituencies the party contested against Congress candidates whereas in some constituencies the party also canvassed for the Congress candidates. The study revealed that the BPF dominated the Assembly election in the BTAD region. In this election the majority 35.5% respondents expressed their support to BPF. Study also revealed that the party still continues to hold its support among the cross section of communities.

The critical appraisal of the performances of different political parties in the given elections gives clear picture of the voting pattern of the people in BTAD. It is clear that the BPF has a strong hold in the BTAD enjoys popular support and acceptance not only among the Bodos but also among the cross section of communities. Although, the ABSU backed candidates enjoy wide support among the Bodo voters but it failed to garner the popular support of cross section of communities due to its limited social inclusiveness with other social bases. While the other party and the Independent candidates has a pity existence of support base in the region. It is known fact that the decision and choices of the voters in elections is motivated by various socio-economic, political-cultural values and personal traits of the candidates.

## **II. VOTING PATTERN AND GENDER ORIENTATION**

In 2009 Lok Sabha election, the study revealed that both the gender polled almost evenly to the BPF. Among male 51.56% and 51.03% female respondent expressed to have voted to BPF. While the ABSU backed party and State Party (AGP) shared an average vote of 22.3% and 18.8% each out of which both the parties shared the male and female votes almost evenly.

In 2010 BTC election also, the study revealed that both the gender polled almost evenly to the BPF. Among male 55.72% and 55.06% female respondent expressed to have voted to BPF. While the ABSU backed party shared 18.90% and 15.18% male and female votes respectively. Notably, the National Party shared few percentages higher among the female votes. In Assembly Election 2011 also, the study reveal the similar

pattern of vote share of both the genders. No sharp contrast of rise and fall of vote share were seen from the survey data.

### III. VOTING PATTERN AND CASTE ORIENTATION

In 2009 Parliamentary election, the study revealed that the BPF continued its popularity among all the caste groups. It is notable that the BPF garnered higher support from the Adivasi and Muslim voters. The party appeared to have split social base of support among Bodo and Rajbangsi as the majority of the former prefers ABSU backed candidates whereas the latter favoured State party. It is also notable that sizable Muslim voters had supported the State party. The study of 2010 BTC election shows the popularity of BPF as the respondents of all section and cross communities have shown their overwhelming support to the party. All the communities favoured BPF in majority though but ABSU backed candidates also fared well among the Bodos. A sizeable number of Muslims voter favoured National party especially the Congress party and other like AIUDF while the State party and IND (Other) remained favourites among sizable Rajbangsi group. The study of 2011 Assembly election shows a slight shift in the support base and voting pattern. It is noted that the support base of BPF among the Muslim and Rajbangsi shows declined and majority of the Rajbangsi votes went to State party and IND and sizable number of Muslim favoured State party and National party.

**Table: 5.13.3 Voting pattern of the respondents in the given elections**

BTAD	LOK SABHA ELECTION- 2014				BTC ELECTION- 2015					ASSAM ASSEMBLY ELECTION- 2016				
	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	IND/Others	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	National Party	IND/Others	BPF	ABSU (Back Party)	State Party	National Party	IND/Others
SEX														
Male	54	53	28	71	79	37	28	30	37	79	38	35	27	31
Female	48	46	35	42	53	39	19	26	30	53	26	42	19	31
CASTE														
Bodo	31	64	0	0	41	53	0	4	0	42	53	0	2	0
Adivasi	31	18	8	36	47	11	12	18	9	38	11	12	21	12
Muslim	21	13	29	31	21	9	13	21	27	31	0	29	19	16
Rajbangsi	19	4	26	46	23	3	22	13	31	21	0	36	4	34
Tot.	102	99	63	113	132	76	47	56	67	132	64	77	46	62
PC %	25.5	24.7	15.8	28.3	34.9	20.1	12.4	14.8	17.7	33	16	19.3	11.5	15.5

Source: Field Survey

## **I. VOTING PATTERN OF BTAD ELECTIONS- 2014, 2015 & 2016**

Notably, the major political shift began to take place in the electoral politics of BTAD region. The study revealed that the social base of BPF had switched over to the Independent candidates supported by the umbrella organisations of the non-Bodo group. Although, the BPF had a sizable support base among the Adivasi and Muslim group but the party lost its grip among the Bodos and Rajbangsi. It is notable that the party had lost credibility and supports among major chunk of populations of all the communities in compare to the previous election. The ABSU backed Independent candidate supported by the BJP was a major rival of BPF and a strong contender in this poll but the party failed to draw the support of non Bodos. Not surprisingly, the Independent candidate backed by the non-Bodo umbrella organisation able to draw the support of major chunk of non-Bodo voters.

The 2015 BTC election also had a similar shrinking trend among the BPF supporter. Although, the BPF managed to form the Council government but the voting pattern in this election reveal a shrinking trend of the BPF. The study revealed that the BPF garnered the support of 34.9% of the total respondents. The study revealed that the shares of votes was more evenly distributed among different parties rather than concentrated to a particular party. The figures in the table indicate that other than the ruling BPF all the parties able to garner support from their respective social bases. It is noted that the PCDR, the ABSU backed party did well in majority of the Bodo dominated constituencies in all the districts of BTAD. The party emerged as a strong political opponent of the BPF influential mostly among the Bodo voters. The party draw a considerable 20.10% supports of the total respondents. The State Party like AIUDF also did well and shares a sizable percentage of support and few seats in this election. The other parties of non-Boro like SJA and OSS also put a decent performance with sizable percentage of vote share and few seats. It is noteworthy to mention that the Independent candidates supported by different social organisations like the ABSU and non-Boro organisation altogether grabbed 15 seats.

The 2016 Assam Assembly election saw the alliance of two major parties of the region with the National parties. The BPF-BJP locked into pre-poll alliance; whereas, the ABSU backed UPPL came into poll understanding with the Congress. The study revealed that the BJP-BPF alliance received well support from the cross section of



communities. The BPF came out with 33% of respondents support was partly because of Modi wave of the time. The party received support from the Hindu traditional BJP vote bank. The ABSU backed candidates failed to do well under shrinking Congress. Other party also failed to put up a good performance in this election.

The critical appraisal of the voting pattern in this election shows the influences of the number of reasons- One such reason was the series of incident of communal clashes that occurred between Bodo and Muslim in 2012 which created a trust deficit between the two social groups. This incident affected the political harmony and social base of BPF among the Muslim group. Another, reason was the formation of political bloc in the line of Bodo and non-Boro also affected the support base of BPF among cross section of communities in the Lok Sabha election. Again, the communal disturbance that broke in 2014 between the Bodo and Adivasi groups ignited from the killing incident by the militant group NDFB(S) also greatly harm the social harmony and political relation between the Bodo and Adivasi groups. However, the alliance of BPF with BJP in 2016 Assembly election benefited the party to retained the seats. The study revealed that these are the major factors in the changing trends of the voting behaviour of the people in BTAD.

## **II. VOTING PATTERN AND GENDER ORIENTATION**

In a field study, it was found that the total number of 377 respondents cast their vote out of 400 in 2014 Parliamentary Election and out of them 51.50% was male and 42.75% were female. Among male respondents 32.27% and 23.33% female respondents expressed to have favoured Independent candidate whereas, 24.54% male and 26.66% female voters expressed to have voted to the BPF candidate in Parliamentary Election from the No. 5 Kokrajahar Constituency. The vote share of ABSU backed Independent candidate also remained almost equal to BPF in both male and female. Study of 2015 BTC Election revealed that 35.90% among male and 29.44% among female favoured BPF was higher among all the other parties. It is noted that all the other parties have more or less equal vote share among both the genders. In 2011 Assembly Election also the BPF had similar trend of vote share among both the genders. The ABSU backed candidate also continued its previous trend; while the State party saw a leap among women voters; and no major changes in the trend was seen among the other parties.

### **III. VOTING PATTERN AND CASTE ORIENTATION**

The study of caste wise voting pattern revealed that the Bodo voters are apparently more centric towards Bodo political parties as the majority of the Bodo voters are either ABSU supporter or BPF supporter. The voting trend among the Bodos seems to have repeated continuously without major changes. It is noted that the ABSU plays a determining role among the political life of the Bodos as the organisation seemingly have far reaching implication and influence over the voting behaviour of the Bodos. The organisation seems to owe allegiance of more than half of the total Bodo population. The social base of BPF is virtually evenly spread among all the social groups. The BPF, no doubt have its support base among the other caste like Adivasi, Muslim and Rajbangsi but these elections shows the erosion of BPF among different caste groups. In particular, the votes of Muslim and Rajbangsi groups are trending more towards State party and National party as well as to IND (Other) than previous elections. Among the Rajbangsi group the voting trend is seemingly shifting towards Independent candidates backed by the non-Bodo organisation.

#### **5.14 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The performances of the elected representatives determine the voting behaviour of the voters. Generally, in a well educated and politically conscious society the performances of the candidates and the overall political party greatly matter because the performances of the elected representatives are likely to be judge by the voters and based on their merits and performances the conscious citizens will likely to take voting decision or elect their representatives. For many reasons, there may be allegations and doubts as well as acknowledgement and appreciation of the representatives among the general people based on their performance and non-performance because the voters will tend to judge the service of the representatives both as an individual and the party as a whole. Question to this matter has been put by the researcher to the respondents to extract the opinion about the performances of the elected representatives. Based on the opinion of the respondents an attempt has been made to analyse and measure the performances of the elected representatives- MP, MLA and BTCLA with an indicator like- Satisfactory, Average and Poor.

**Table: 5.14 Respondent's view on the performance of the present elected representatives- MP, MLA and BTCLA**

BTAD		Performance of the Representatives								
		MP			MLA			BTCLA		
		Satisfied	Avg.	Poor	Satisfied	Avg.	Poor	Satisfied	Avg.	Poor
SEX	Male	17	28	178	33	85	102	41	80	99
	Female	10	23	147	29	75	76	33	66	81
CASTE										
<b>Bodo</b>		0	0	100	25	46	29	29	40	31
<b>Adivasi</b>		6	16	78	14	41	45	14	43	43
<b>Muslim</b>		7	14	79	11	37	52	16	35	49
<b>Rajbangsi</b>		14	27	59	12	36	52	15	28	57
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>PC %</b>		<b>6.75</b>	<b>12.75</b>	<b>81.2</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>45</b>

**Source: Field Survey**

The study revealed that the majority 81.2% of the respondents are not satisfied with the present elected MP of the Kokrajhar Constituency. Survey revealed that least 6.75% are satisfied; while, 12.75% respondents credited the present MP as average. In respect of MLAs, the satisfied respondents with the work of the elected MLAs are only 15.5%, whereas, 40% of the respondents credited the MLAs of the BTAD region as average. In contrary, the larger 44.5% of the respondents opined the work of the MLA as poor. In respect of BTCLA, 45% of the respondents think they are not efficient and underperforming. While, the 36.5% of the respondents think the BTCLA's are average in their performances and the fewer respondents with 18.5% think that the BTCLA's are working satisfactorily. Thus, the study revealed that the majority of the voters viewed that the present MLA and MCLAs are performing neither very poor nor satisfactory. However, in respect of MP the performance seems unsatisfactory among majority respondents.

### **5.15 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE CHALLENGES TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTION IN BTAD**

Ensuring freedom to vote through free and fair election has been a fundamental principle of democracy. The State of democracy of a country can be determined by the degree of freedom which the citizens enjoy to exercise their political will freely to elect

his or her choice in free and fair political environment without being subjected to threat. The free and fair elections also influence the voting behaviour of the voters to great degree. In a violent and repressive political environment the political behaviour of the voters is likely to be motivated by the fear factors. Since, the BTAD region is considered to be one among the most sensitive zone and often affected and surrounded by the political turmoil and controversies the researcher explored this dimension so as to get a clear vision on its impact on the voting behaviour of the people.

**Table: 5.15 Respondent's View regarding the challenges to free and fair elections**

BTAD	Free & Fair Election			Muscle Power/ Fear of violence	Presence of Party man	Inadequate Security	Influenced by money power	Unawareness Of voters	Dictated by Community Leader/elders	PC %	
	Yes	No	Don't Know								
SEX	Male	103	74	43	27	12	7	7	1	3	25.9
	Female	73	48	59	31	22	2	0	2	8	36.1
<hr/>											
Bodo	51	22	27	9	7	0	3	0	3		22
Adivasi	34	41	25	23	11	4	0	0	3		41
Muslim	42	27	31	12	7	3	2	3	0		27
Rajbangsi	49	32	19	14	9	2	2	0	5		32
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>122</b>
<b>PC %</b>	44	30.5	25.5	14.5	8.5	2.25	1.75	0.75	2.75		30.5

**Source: Field Survey**

In survey 44% respondents have expressed that the elections in BTAD areas are held in free and fair manner. These respondents have never felt or experienced any dictate or threat to vote of his or her choice. But, a large chunk of respondents with 30.5% feels that they do not get adequate freedom to vote of their choice for various reasons; whereas, the 25.5% have either no proper idea or do not want to argue on this subject. Among the respondents who do not feel free and safe to vote of their choice; the 14.5% of them cited the reasons as- use of muscle power or the fear of violence as the prime reason, while, 8.5% feels the presence of party man also hinder the free and fair election along with other reasons such as inadequate security, influenced by money power, unawareness of voters and dictate of community leaders or elders also do hinder the exercise of free and fair election to some degree.

## 5.16 AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION RELATED TO THE IMPACT OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN BTAD ELECTIONS

The BTAD areas have experienced several series of communal clashes and ethnic tension in recent past. The area is considered to be one of the most vulnerable and a hotbed of communal violence and political disturbances. The violence and rioting plunders not only the social harmony but also divide the people and politics into a communal line.

**Table: 5.16 Respondents view on impact of communal riots on voting behaviour**

		Communal Riots & its impact on voting behavior			Respondents view on responsible for riots					
		Yes	No	Don't Know	State Govt.	BTC Govt.	Illegal Immigrants	Militant Groups	Other	Total
SEX	Male	116	44	60	14	24	47	37	12	134
	Female	92	32	56	3	12	26	29	4	74
<b>Bodo</b>		42	26	32	2	0	34		6	42
<b>Adivasi</b>		58	17	25	8	17	0	26	7	58
<b>Muslim</b>		61	12	27	7	14	0	37	3	61
<b>Rajbangsi</b>		47	21	32	0	5	39	3	0	47
<b>Total</b>		<b>208</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>PC %</b>		<b>52</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18.25</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>

**Source: Field Survey**

Since, the study areas have undergone many communal disturbances time and again; the researcher pondered around the questions of its impact on the communities suffered had tempted to explore this dimension that- “How has the communal violence impact the voting behaviour of the people”? In this respect, the majority 52% feels that the series of communal clashes and violence have greatly impacted on the voting behaviour of the people. This communal disharmony has changed the perception of suffered groups towards another group. The study also revealed that the one suffered group accused the other group of being perpetrator. It has created a trust deficit and rivalry among these groups. These communal tensions of different social groups have a political orientation manifesting the political behaviour of one group against the other. On the other hand, the 19% of the respondents argued that the violence have not impacted the voting behaviour of the people as the ruling BPF still enjoys support from

cross section of communities. While 29% of the respondents refrained to argue or have never thought about this issue. The researcher also enquired the respondents about “Whom they blame or they think is responsible”? In this respect, the majority of the respondents blame the illegal immigration and militant groups as the chief responsible for the outbreak of frequent communal violence and political disturbances in the region.

## **5.17 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher has made a detailed study on the subject-matter of the research problem through the study of secondary information from the books, journals, news paper, published articles, statistical report and data on the related subject as well as field investigation and by collecting the first hand data and information by the researcher himself from the respondents through sets of structured and unstructured interview scheduled. From the above analysis of the data acquired from the field investigation and from various secondary data and information, the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD can be put forth as the major findings of the study in the following words-

### **5.17.1 VOTING TREND SETTING FACTORS**

1. The political aspiration of the Bodos- strong aspiration for separate State Bodoland is one prominent reason that have organised the Bodos into one distinct political unit different from the others. Motivated by their strong political aspiration- centre around fundamental issue of linguistic and cultural identity have been the principal foundation for the formation of voting behaviour of the Bodos. Voting behaviour of the Bodos in general is determined or revolved around the demand for political autonomy. In this light, it may be traced back to the period- when the Tribal League tried to organise the plain tribals of Assam centre around the demand for separate electorate and reservation of seats for the tribals in the Assembly as early as 1933. Such attempt continued under different political and social organisation of the Bodos at different period of time. In 1967, the legacy was continued under the PTCA and their demand for ‘Udayachal’, a Union Territory for the Plain Tribals of Assam. Late 1980s, the ABSU Movement for separate State Bodoland gave a new dimension to the Bodo politics in Assam. In another political development, when Telengana was created as the 29<sup>th</sup> State of Indian Union in the year 2013, the ABSU

revived the Bodoland movement. It may be mentioned that- the Bodo movement have arouse a sense of sub-nationalism among the Bodos based on the ideas and shared experience of politically deprived ethno-linguistic group in the hand of so called elite Assamese political class. Based on such views the “creation of Bodoland” have been the manifesto of almost all the major Bodo political parties’ election after elections and the motivating factor too’ among the Bodo voters. This issue with great political significance have been pertinent in BTAD regions since ages. Likewise, the Rajbangsi group also made a similar demand for the creation of Kamatapur State falling under the proposed Bodoland. There have been these statehood demand and counter demand between different groups of communities which assume a determining factor in shaping the voting behaviour of different social groups during elections. As for instance- the shifting voting behaviour of different social groups in BTAD region can be virtually noticed- when the Centre held series of tripartite talks with the Bodo organizations just before the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election and assured to resume the tripartite talks if it returned to power. The Centre constituted One– Man Committee of G.K Pillai to look into the matter but it was severely criticised by the non-Bodo organizations along with the ABSU. This political trick of the Centre has a significant affect in the voting behaviour of both the Bodos and Rajbangsi groups during the 16<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary election.

2. Clash of Interest among different ethnic groups is one prominent reason that motivates the voting behaviour of different social groups. Sanjay Hazarika observes that- “All the ethnic groups in the BTAD consider themselves as minorities and expressed their aspirations through insurgencies. The guns, both legal and illegal dominate the lives in the BTAD as State police and the politicians are complicit with the armed groups. Almost all the ethnic groups have active insurgent groups in the region. Among them are Adivasi Cobra Forces, Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam, All Adivasi National Liberation Army, Adivasi People’s Army, Birsa Commando Force, Kamatapuri Liberation Organization (KLO), Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam, NDFB and Santhal Liberation Tigers. Ethnic relation between competing groups has been fragile with clashes over space and identity. There have been several armed groups seeking various forms of autonomy or independence in Assam alone of which most of them are in ceasefire or in

negotiations to settle their grievances”.<sup>227</sup> Misra further observes that “as long militant groups of Bodo was at its height, efforts by non-Bodo communities to organize themselves did not meet with much success. But, once militancy started ebbing with even the dreaded National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) faction led by Ranjan Daimary going in for a ceasefire and willing to open talks with the Government of India (GOI), the non-Bodo communities drew courage to organize themselves under the umbrella organizations called Non-Bodo Protection Forum (NBPF) which includes representatives from the All Assam Koch Rajbanshi Students Union (AKRSU), All Bodoland Minority Students Union (ABMSU), All Assam Gorkha Students Union (AAGSU), All Assam Tea Tribes Students Union (AATTSU) and Bengali Students Federation (BSF). Amongst these components, the ABMSU which was a wing of All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) and which represented the Muslim settlers was an influential presence”.<sup>228</sup>

3. Clashes for Space or control over land have been the universal problem throughout the history of human civilization. Land rights provide a strong basis of politics among the tribals of plain Assam including BTAD region. Voting behaviour and tribal politics is rooted over the right of legitimate ownership of Land and Resources having legal proclamation under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886. The Constitutional Act of Chapter X (Ten) speaks about the provision for the protection of tribal land rights under the Tribal Belts and Blocks. But the non-implementation of this provision over the decades and continuous land alienation of tribals due to illegal land encroachment in the protected areas have threatened the very existence of plain tribals of Assam. Absence of concrete policies and strong will on the part of State government to implement the existing land laws and constitutional provisions and the questions of political marginalisation in their own ancestral land have become a hotcake of political debate centre around the existence of tribals. On the other hand, the creation of Territorial Council under the Sixth Schedule provision of the Constitution of India with reservation policy of 30 seats for tribals, 5 seats for non-tribals and 5 seats for open category comprising most

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<sup>227</sup>Sanjay Hazarika (2014): Retrieved from Al Jazeera Website: <http://www.aljazeera.com/complexity-conflict-assambodoland2014>, p- 8

<sup>228</sup>U. Misra (2014): India's North East: Identity Movements, State and Civil Society, New Delhi: OUP



parts of Tribal Belt and Block areas have arouse apprehension amongst various ethnic groups of BTAD.

4. As reported by the “Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2012”- “The creation of a particular ethnic homeland without ensuring sufficient Constitutional rights to other communities living in the region was the beginning of the conflict lines which leads to the repeated clashes between the Bodos and other communities. Ethnic groups including the Adivasis, Bodos and Muslims virtually live on edges. Even a small clash between individuals of different ethnic groups has a potential to turn into communal riot.”<sup>229</sup> It may be stated that the inadequate Constitutional provisions for political safeguard to other non-Tribal communities under the BTC Accord have arouse apprehension, deprivation and political insecurity among the non-Tribals. Emergence of Bodo and non-Bodo politics has its root in BTC Accord itself.
5. Recurring ethnic violence in the BTAD area is also determinant factor of voting behaviour of the people in BTAD. Partly the ethnic violence in the region has divided the ethnic groups into opposing political forces. The study based on reports and articles revealed that the 2012 Communal Clash between Bodo and Muslim immigrants and the 2014 Bodo- Adivasi massacre has a direct connection with the political switchover in 2014 Lok Sabha election of Kokrajhar Constituency and 2015 BTC election. In particular, the political climate began to change in BTAD after the 2012 communal violence and 2014 massacre. It is revealed that the voting behaviour took a course of Bodo versus non-Bodo in the 2014 Lok Sabha election and 2015 BTC election.
6. Study brings out to light that these communal clashes have caused hundreds of death and millions of displacement in the region. The issue of internal displacement becomes hotcake for many politician and political parties during election but the issue remain unaddressed. Observation of some of the scholars in this respect may be put forth- “The herculean task ahead of the BTAD authority is the rehabilitation process of the large number of IDPs living in the relief camps in the region. The State government with the help of the local administration did start rehabilitation

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<sup>229</sup>Asian Centre for Human Rights (2012): Assam Riots: Preventable but not Prevented, New Delhi: ACHR

programs, although, in many places the situation is not conducive for the IDPs to go back to their native places as claimed by the Bodos and non-Bodo groups. With the process those IDPs who have been living in the relief camps for decades have returned to their original home but many were unable to return because they are termed as Encroachers. The Forum of Development Cooperation with indigenous peoples (FDCIP) report says that even after the rehabilitation process about 23,000 families could not return to their respective homes as they are termed as Encroachers, who were unable to resettle in their original habitat”.<sup>230</sup>

7. Survey of socio-economic condition and political awareness revealed unsatisfactory figure of the majority respondents. Only a small percentage of respondents belong to educated and cultured background and know properly about the electoral politics of the area. Media exposure to majority of respondents does not always indicate the true alertness of the citizens if they do not know about the necessity of voting. Education makes citizen alert about the politics and activities of their government and help in making a conscious decision based on individual judgment of right and wrong of the parties and candidates. To this fact the study shows that the majority respondents cast their vote only to elect the candidate based on their party preferences.
8. Media and exposure plays a vital role in moulding the voting behaviour of the voters. Both the electronic and print media play equally vital role to motivate the common people to exercise their political rights, arouse political opinion and to form voting behaviour during election. It educate the voters about the parties, informs about the policies and activities, achievements and failures of the government, significance of voting and disseminates socio-political knowledge among the voters and help in becoming responsible and conscious citizen. In absence of access to news channels and newspapers regularly, a person cannot be aware about the politics of its own State and the country. Furthermore, the question of socio-political awareness of the respondents is directly related to both the electronic and print media which play a crucial role in moulding public opinion and

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<sup>230</sup>T. Murmu (2009): Bodo-Santhal Conflicts in Assam: The Evil Design, Silent Sufferings and the Process of Reconciliation, Forum Conference 2009: Violent Conflicts, Ceasefire and Peace Accords through the Lens of Indigenous Peoples pp. 9-20

knowledge. From the data, it was found that barely 2.25% respondents read news papers regularly. It is revealed that the news paper is not the most popular media among the rural people as the circulation is not available in rural BTAD. However, it was found that 48.6% among male and 21.6% among female respondents read news paper sometimes. The study also revealed that the overwhelming 89.50% majority respondents have access on TV and news channel either regularly or sometimes. Among the respondents, 51% who uses social media are mostly youths. The reach out of electronic media and social media in the rural areas has made the majority sections of people politically aware to some extent. Thus, the electronic media and social media have more profound impact on the moulding of voting behaviour of the people especially among the young educated. But, the study also revealed that the female are less conscious in socio- political affairs of the society when compared to their male counterparts. In a caste wise, the Adivasi group have relatively lower percentage in access to electronic media and social media though there is not much gap with other communities. Controls of media houses' have its own significant role in moulding the political behaviour of the people. Media houses are mainly controlled by the mainstream Assamese. Many a times the role and motives of the media is also questionable because they campaign their political agenda against the BTAD and particular group.

9. Growing political consciousness among the people in the BTAD region can also be attributed to their direct participation in the political parties because the party organisations and party cadres assist individual voters effectively to understand the electoral politics of an area. From the field study, it was found that 8% respondents are directly related to political party of their choice; whereas 15.5% have no party designation but they are active supporter of the party of their choice. The majority of the respondents participate in the political meetings and programmes as a party man, supporter or audience' however indicates the growing consciousness among the people of their local politics and the State politics.
10. Survey also explored the experiences of the respondents regarding the campaigning of different political parties at the time of election. Higher numbers of respondent have to say that rural areas have higher political campaign than the urban areas. It

may have direct relations with the socio-economic conditions and level of political awareness among the rural folk. Generally, the rural folk are tend to be socio-economically weaker and politically least conscious than the urban folk. As a matter of fact the political leaders try to lure or win them in many ways. In this light the fact is to be mentioned that- more than 95% of the BTAD area is composed of rural villages. The study also brought this fact into light that the sizeable numbers of the rural respondents of the BTAD are motivated by the party workers in case of taking voting decisions.

11. Questions of choice among voters between the party, candidate and the background of the candidate remain another important aspect of political decision making. Survey brings out that the majority respondent preferred political party as the most motivating factor. Community leadership, personality and past performance of the candidate appeared to be least effective as only few dozens of respondents were motivated by these qualities of the candidates. Directly or indirectly it indicates that the popularity of the party is the main basis for voting decision of the voters irrespective of personality cult of the candidates. Most common view of almost all the respondents was to elect the 'Political Party' of their choice. Survey revealed that the majority of the respondents have voted for BPF candidates in the name of party to elect them as their government. Victory of the BPF since 2005 BTC election to 2011 Assembly election with overwhelming majority' have partly the reason of both acceptance among non- Bodos and sympathy among Bodos. Another reason behind the support to BPF among the non-Bodos is the inclusive policies of the party towards cross section of communities. For majority respondents' even the identity, quality of the candidates or past background' does have a little matter in making their decision. Likewise, some respondents who choose political party because of its service or leadership also preferred the BPF as the most efficient for the region. But, the study also brings to light that the voting behaviour of the people after the 2011 onward has changed due to several reasons. The voting trends revealed to have switched towards evenly distribution in vote share from that of traditional BPF supporter to other parties also.

12. Survey of age-wise voting preference revealed that the majority respondents prefer regional political party over the national and State parties. It is mainly due to the fact that the regional party like BPF have still significant and well knitted social bases among different caste groups. Evenly spread out social base of the BPF was noted among different age groups and social groups. No major contrast was noticed among different age groups of social bases.
13. Survey of caste-wise voting preference revealed the domination of BPF among different social groups. Popularity of BPF among different social groups was noted higher particularly during its first and second term election i.e. 2005 BTC election to 2011 Assembly election. Elections from 2014 to 2016 noted erosion in social base of BPF among all social groups. Survey shows that higher among the Rajbangsi group supported the non-Bodo Independent candidate and sizeable number of them supported the State party. Among Muslims the BPF, IND and State have almost equal distribution of vote share. Among Adivasi community the BPF apparently haven't completely lost its base but the shot up in vote share to the IND, State party and National party was noted. Seemingly the Bodo group is deeply attached with the regional party simply because of the fact that the parties- like BPF, BPPF, PCDR and UPP are the natural offshoot of their Bodoland movement. They are emotionally and politically connected deeply with the Bodoland movement and as such these parties have able to grab the sympathy of the Bodos. In general, the BPF party in particular have able to win the support of other caste also because of its inclusive ideology and policies.
14. Survey based on "Gender and Religion" voting preferences did not show any major impact in the voting behaviour of the people. Study did not revealed major difference in the preference of Candidates based on their gender and religion. Gender wise and Religion wise voting preferences of different social groups' shows no major contrast towards particular political parties other than the Muslim group who have sizable number of supporter of AIUDF and INC.
15. Survey of income wise voting preferences revealed that the Regional Party is more popular than the State and National Party among the voters across income groups. It

was also revealed that the BPF is the most dominant Regional Party which still enjoys acceptance and popularity among the voters across different income groups and among different caste groups. The popularity of the National and State Party is also not far behind as the sizeable number of groups belonging to Adivasi and Muslim community is inclining to it. It may be stated that the popularity of these party is growing in BTAD region can be seen as an alternative party to BPF which is potential threat and challenge to the political supremacy of BPF.

16. Another significant issue in which the researcher has examined was the question of ensuring “free and fair” election. A sizable number of respondents argued that they feel threatened about their safety and security of life during election. The 14.5% of the respondents argued that the demonstration of muscle power by the party makes the election risky in parts of BTAD. These respondents argued that the fear of violence is the main issue in the region. Besides, 8.5% of the respondents argued that the presence of party man in the polling booth and inadequate security personnel is the major challenges in the region during elections. The study brings to light the significant point relating to the security issue of the polling booths. Since the north east area is a hotbed of different extremist groups, the chances of occurrence of chaos at the time of elections in different parts of Assam are very high. In Kokrajhar district too, different untoward incidents take place at the time of election, especially in the rural areas. So, for conducting free and fair election, the security arrangement of the district must be tight and strict. Survey clarifies that though the majority 44% respondents expressed their satisfaction regarding the “free and fair” election but the denial of sizable 30.5% is a matter of both question and challenge. So, it can be said that, in some rural and remote areas of the district, voters are not given enough protection at the time of casting vote and obviously it creates a negative effect in the minds of the general people.
17. Coalition politics or alliance among different political parties on certain common ground, agreements and political understanding is likely to affect the voting behaviour of the people. For almost two decades the BPF has been in coalition with the party in government in the State. Virtually the alliance of the BPF with the Congress and BJP in 2011 and 2016 had immensely helped the party to ensure its

seat share in the Assembly election. The coalition of BPF with the ruling party in the State has a crucial role in changing the whole electoral politics of the region. It is a matter of fact that the socio-economic and political atmosphere of the entire BTAD area was positively affected because of the BPF's coalition with the State government for consecutive three terms in 2006, 2011 and 2016. Surprisingly, the survey revealed that only a hand full of respondent credit the coalition or alliance to have effect in their voting behaviour. Similarly, a good number of respondents have hardly any idea about this matter. It means that the majority people of the BTAD are not aware of this major achievement of their favoured BPF party. The common people of the area hardly know the importance of a coalition government with a party. They were unaware of the context to which this political agreement would be instrumental in the socio-political and economic development of the BTAD area. The respondents' view also makes it clear that the majority of the general people of the area are not touched by any political dilemma; they simply cast their vote to elect their eligible political party for their area. But, the survey revealed that almost half of the total respondents forwarded negative responses about the performances of the last elected candidates of their respective areas. Study revealed that the majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the performances of the present MP. More than 80% credited the performance of MP as poor. Overall opinion of the respondents for MLA and MCLA came in "satisfactory and average" was little higher than that of the negative opinion. It indicates that the performances of the present MLA and MCLA are little better than that of present MP.

18. Administration of BTC government has been questioned from time to time by many conscious citizens. Study is also directed to find out the perception of the respondents in this matter. Opinion poll shows that almost half of the respondents are not satisfied with the working of the ruling government of BTAD in matter of providing corruption free administration. Only 19.7% and 41.8% opined in satisfied and average; while 39% credited the ruling government as poor. Study revealed that the BTC administration is corrupt, not accountable and transparent. Majority of the respondents questioned the credibility of the BTC government. But, in spite of the question over its credibility the majority of them also called it efficient. Contradictory in opinion may lies to this fact that the BTC government is partly

successful and partly failure to fulfil the expectations of the people. Study revealed that the BTAD region have improved in all sectors of infrastructures like-the road and communication system, medical and health care, educational institution, economic and living conditions of the people. It can be stated that the government has worked for the welfare of the people and partly successful to deliver an all round development and improvement in the region but failed to curb the corruption. Part of the reason for dissatisfaction of the people may be because of some backdated policies and their implementation by the government and the lack of cooperation among the party members and other officials of the government. Here, it can also be said that the people are expecting a quick and prompt function from their elected political party as well as from their government, so a sense of dissatisfaction has developed among the people of the district in the event of delay of performing as per expectations.

19. Survey also brings to light that the people of BTAD are more regionalist in nature and approach towards politics. In particular, the regionalism among Bodos appeared to be higher and so is motivation for their voting behaviour. Majority opined that the regional issues can be addressed better and achievement of political upliftment is possible only by strengthening the regional party. Hence, they extend their unreserved support to the party with their closed eyes. In this connection, it was noted that the political sentiments of the Bodos have grown upward with the participation of their own party after the creation of BTC. But the degree of rationality of the voters remains a question because many support or vote without proper knowledge of the candidate or the political party. As such, voting behaviour of the BTAD seems to be least progressive and logical towards making political decisions due to lack of political conscious.

## **5.18 SUGGESTIONS**

In the light of the above discussion, the following suggestions can be put forward for overall socio-economic and political development of people living in BTAD:

1. Advanced and modern technologies should be introduced in the income generating sectors so as to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people of BTAD



because the socio-economic variables came into light as one of the most motivating factor of the voting behaviour of the people. In this light, emphasis should be made for the formulation and implementation of more scientific and practical plans and policies for the proper development of different fields.

2. Lack of proper political consciousness among the rural people came into light as another determining factor of voting behaviour. Lack of education among the majority voters is the primary reason for politically unaware. In this light, the work should be done towards development of higher education and its value for the growth of consciousness among the voters of rural areas.
3. Concerned agencies should engage in spreading the growth of consciousness level among the people of BTAD regarding political rights. Measures for development of scientific temperament should be emphasised to develop a sense of rationality among the people of BTAD in connection to exercise of voting rights. In this light, conduct of election awareness programs frequently can benefits the laymen.
4. Strict security arrangement, installation of CCTV cameras in all polling booths to monitor every action in and outside the polling booths should be made available to conduct smooth and free and fair election.
5. Increase the number of polling stations to lighten the voters' burden per booth and provision for separate polling stations for women should be made to avoid women-related mishaps.
6. Updated NRC should be implemented soon and accordingly voter ID cards should be provided to the genuine and legal citizens to avoid the problems of doubtful citizens. Micro observer should increase frequency of their visit to the polling booths.
7. Legislative Assembly Constituencies should be reconstructed out of the existing ones to cope with the increasing population and 70 percent of the Legislative Constituency seats should be reserved for the STs, especially the Bodos as per as the BTAD area is concerned.
8. The Union and State government should take concrete steps as early as possible to fulfil the aspirations of the Bodo community, so that they can stand in the society matching shoulders with the other developed communities of the State.

9. Constitutional provision the “Tribal Belts and Blocks” should be implemented so as to ensure the land rights and safeguarding the political interest of the tribals. Tribals are already outnumbered by the non-tribals in the “Tribal Belts and Blocks” due to unchecked influx and illegal encroachment of tribal lands. Therefore, the government should identify such illegal encroacher and evict them.

## **5.19 CONCLUSION**

Above findings from this study make one to conclude the voting behaviour in the BTAD area as the following ---

1. That the voting behaviour of the voters, in the BTAD is not stable one. In the first elections to the BTC, they voted into en mass as to give a chance to the outfit to prove it’s bona fide. But in the subsequent elections they began to vote against the incumbent political party.
2. Although there is clear Bodo and non-Bodo divide, during the elections they do not get polarised on this line. Continued win of the ruling party with Bodo dominance proves this very amply. Although the opposition parties are dominated by the non-Bodos, they have failed to secure the non-Bodo votes as believed by the laymen.
3. Various considerations influence the voting behaviour in the BTAD. Influential section of the non-Bodos has accepted position and functions in the ruling political party. A substantial non-Bodo population have become members of the ruling party. Many of them have been influenced by the considerations for money, position and power in the ruling political party.
4. Most of the non-Bodo populations are educated and advanced in the society. Being groomed by secular education, they do not tend to be influenced by petty considerations on the line of community and religion. They have got secular outlook and try to analyse everything in an objective manner. They try to judge the things from the point of merit and yields to the society in common.
5. For the above reasons only, the support base of the ruling BPF political party is found to have remained almost intact. The ruling party could effectively utilise the above factors to its favour. Moreover, it could draw support from opponents and

non-Bodo political activists in general by alluring them through offer of position, money, power and pelf within the party structure as resorted to by most of the ruling political parties in the country as a whole.

6. Voting behaviour in BTAD can be therefore sum up as- the Bodos in particular is mainly conditioned by their community sentiment is deep rooted in their political aspiration centre around for preservation of identity and culture. Other groups' no doubt are also equally connected with their community sentiment but the fact that most of the seats in the region are reserved for Schedule Tribes gives them a little scope to advance their political venture. As stated above, the BPF's social base among Adivasi and Muslim is due to the fact that the party is inclusive in their ideology and policies. Neither these groups have their own political party nor does the non-Bodo organisation represent their interest properly.

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