

“THE VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN BTAD ELECTION: 2004-2016”

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By

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study entitled “The Voting Behaviour of the People of BTAD in the elections from 2004 to 2016” attempt to study the voting behaviour of the people in BTAD’ elections held from 2004 to 2016. Study examined different determinants of voting behaviour such as socio-economic status of the BTAD, the changing dimensions of the social and political behaviour, ethnic groups, organisations, political parties working in BTAD and different aspects of elections held since 2004 to 2016 in the light of the role of various SES factors in determining the voting behaviour of the people of the BTAD and the problems confronting the free and fair exercise of the voting rights. Study also provides a clear idea about the districts geographical and demographic profile of BTAD. The work is divided into six chapters.

The chapter one is introductory in nature. It provides a conceptual framework of the study. It deals with discussions on the statement of the problems, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypotheses, and review of literature, research questions, methodology, scope and limitations of the study, chapterisation of the thesis and sources of data.

The Second Chapter, “Socio-economic profile of BTAD” present the profile of BTAD and its powers and functions, major political parties operating in the region, demographic, economic, infrastructural and other features of the study area BTAD to give a better perception of the relevant issues under study.

The Chapter three “The history of political awareness among the Bodos and their participation in election of the present day BTAD” intend to trace a brief profile of the study area i.e. BTAD and the election politics of Bodos and trend of electoral behaviour since 1967 to 2001. It was with a view to highlight the different dimensions of social, religious, economic, cultural, linguistic and political changes which have been experienced by the people of the BTAD.

The Chapter Four “The Elections in BTAD, 2004 to 2016: An overview of the state of Assam and BTAD” is devoted to examine different dimensions pertaining to various elections of MCLA, MLA and MP in the BTAD from the year 2004 to 2016 in the study area BTAD. Poll percentages, number of contestant and participation of the political parties on and so forth in the elections of yester years have been analyzed in view to extract understanding of the changes that have taken place in the study area BTAD in the context of electoral politics.

The Chapter five “Determinants of the Voting Behaviour of the people of BTAD, 2004 to 2016” attempt to analyze the voting behaviour of the people of the BTAD based on the primary data acquired from field survey through interview schedule. This is the pivot of the study because the title of the study is pointedly related to the subject matter of voting behaviour of the people of the BTAD area. The different dimensions of voting of the voting behaviour of the voters in all the Parliamentary elections, Assembly Elections and BTC elections have been analyzed to understand the voting pattern of the people of BTAD. Then it discusses the elements influencing the voting behaviour of the people of the BTAD.

Having examined the different dimensions of voting behaviour pattern of the people in BTAD Elections from 2004 to 2016 an attempt is made in this chapter to sum up the analysis and see if any conclusion and recommendation can be drawn as a result of the study.

For the present study, the relevant data were collected from both the primary and secondary sources. For collecting primary data interview method was applied to the randomly selected respondents with the help of a set of carefully prepared structured questionnaire. The study applied historical method, analytical method and participant observatory method. Secondary data were collected from various sources like government, semi-government and non-governmental organizations, books, journals, articles, government reports, newspapers, periodicals, websites and other documents.

Findings of the present study have been systematically discussed in chapter wise-

The first chapter is the foundation of the whole research work. The chapter discussed the conceptual framework and the theoretical determinants of the study and based on it further research work has been logically developed. The chapter begin with the concept of voting behaviour and origin of voting behaviour study in India. The main perspectives of the BTAD and the changing socio-political scenario in BTAD have been briefly introduced as the statement of the problem around which the objectives and rationale to study the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD have been developed. For the proper development of the study, some books relating to elections, voting behaviour, BTAD and Bodos have been reviewed carefully. Research question have been formulated for making a logical analysis of the study. Methodology has been outlined for systematic development of the study. Again, the scope and limitation stated briefly about the study area, relevance and significance of the study and also mentioned about

weaknesses of the study. Lastly the chapterizations of the thesis establish precise and clear idea about the systematic division of the chapters of the whole study.

The second chapter analyze the socio-economic profile of the study area i.e. BTAD. Socio-economic status of an area gives the scenario of social, economic, educational and overall background of the given society. Voting behaviour of the people is greatly motivated by the socio-economic status of an individual or area as a whole. This chapter is crucial for determining and analyzing the voting behaviour of the BTAD. This chapter summarizes the findings of the entire study with conclusions and suggestions.

6.2 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the theoretical analysis it is found that some important SES factors like socio-economic status, education, caste, religion, family environment, political consciousness, age etc. generally plays an important role in determining the voting behaviour of the people in India. The present study also found that the same SES factors motivate the electoral decision making of the people of BTAD. For analyzing the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD, a total of 400 samples, 100 each samples were collected from the four districts of BTAD viz. Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. Out of 400 respondents, 55% were male and 45% were female. Among the respondents, the highest number belonged to the “31-45” and “46-60” age groups. Respondents of age group between “18-30” and above 60 were comparatively lower. Among these respondents who can just “read and write” is higher than HSLC passed, HS passed graduate respondents. Majority respondents were self-employed and farmers engaged in different small business and agricultural activities. The occupational distribution of the respondents is directly related to education. As the number of graduate and higher educated respondents was relatively lower, the government employee or other job among the respondent is also relatively lower.

By analyzing sex wise, age wise and income wise voting preferences of the respondents of the BTAD, it was found that majority of the respondents from diverse communities preferred the regional party BPF. Survey based opinion and data of majority respondents clearly proved to this fact that the aspirations and grievances of the common people of BTAD are related to the performance of the BPF only. Other party and candidates did not create major effect in the electoral politics of BTAD and political decision making of the people until recent years.

As stated in chapter four of this thesis that- when the Congress won 53 seats, few seats short of majority in the Assam State Assembly Elections in 2006, the BPF (Bodoland Peoples' Front) came forward to form a coalition government in Assam. Since then, the Congress party refrained from contesting elections in the BTAD area eventually have led to weakening the organizational base of the party in the BTAD area. This is a determining factor of the voting behaviour of the BTAD people.

But in the elections of the 16th Lok Sabha of 2014 which was held after a bloody communal clash of 2014 the voting behaviour of the entire population living in the BTAD were divided in the two hostile camps – the Bodo and the non-Bodo. The non-Bodo voters voted in favour of Nava Kumar Sarania en mass and he was elected with a huge margin of votes.

Growing political awareness among the people can also be attributed as one of the primary reason for the increasing participation in the political parties because the party help the voters effectively to understand the electoral politics of an area. Survey revealed that a sizable number of respondents were directly or indirectly related to the political party of their choice. This indicates the growing political awareness among the general people of BTAD about the electoral politics of BTAD and the State. Increasing political participation of the people in BTAD after the creation of BTC is the concrete evidence proving it.

The present study is an attempt to analyze and highlight various election results, issues, determinants of voting behaviour, voting pattern among different groups and to draw meaningful conclusions from the experienced gained so far. While drawing conclusion, we can summarize the major findings that we have attempted to find out. The following conclusions seem to emerge:

1. 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. Creation of particular ethnic homeland without ensuring sufficient constitutional rights to the other communities living in the region was the beginning of conflict lines between the Bodos and non-Bodos. Ethnic groups in the region including the Adivasi, Bodo and Muslim virtually live on edges. Even a small clash between individuals of different ethnic groups has a potential to turn into communal riot. All the ethnic groups in the area consider themselves

as minorities and expressed their aspirations through insurgencies. Ethnic relation between competing groups has been fragile with clashes over space and identity. Conflicts, ethnic clashes and internal displacements are one of the determining factors of the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD.

3. The realization on the part of the Bodo leadership that autonomy given to those in the form of BAC (Bodoland Autonomous Council in the year 1993 and another one under the provision of the Sixth Schedule were not enough to reach the goal of realizing their ethnic assertion. Thus, the failure to accommodate the growing socio-economic and political concern of the Bodos after the creation of BTAD has once again reignited the Bodoland movement.
4. Since a long period of time, the demand of the Bodos for the creation of separate state of Bodoland curving out of the state of Assam within the Indian Union and the opposition of the non-Bodos against the creation of Bodoland living in the proposed Bodoland has been one of the determining factors in the elections of the BTAD area.
5. The alliance between the BPF and the INC in the year 2006 and the decision of the later not to contest elections in the BTAD area led to the weakening of the organizational base of the INC in the BTAD area. The moral of the leaders and the workers of the INC in the BTAD area were damaged. This is a determining factor in the voting behaviour of the people

6.3 SUGGESTIONS

1. **Protection of Tribal Land from Non-Tribal Encroacher:** The issue of illegal infiltration into Assam through India-Bangladesh border has been a perennial problem since several decades. “The only reason for which infiltration occurs is the hunger for land by the Bangladeshi migrants who have already encroached upon lakhs of bighas in middle and lower Assam. These people have further encroached upon lakhs of hectares of forest land”.

The legal and constitutional safeguard to the Assamese people envisaged by the Assam Accord of 1985 would be incomplete unless it incorporates the provision for protecting the land. “If the land is reserved only for those, whose names and the names of their forefathers are in the NRC of 1951, most of the encroachers will not get any rights over the land. On the

other hand,” if there is constituency reservation without land reservation, the encroachers will get permanent rights over the encroached land and will be a permanent vote bank for the local politician who can then choose to disregard the local indigenous population. The employment and reservation in the Parliament, Assembly and the local body constituencies are not enough. Reservation of constituencies would benefit only the leader and not the common indigenous people.

In the other north-eastern states, the land has been reserved only for indigenous people; similar legal provisions should be made to safeguard the interest of the indigenous people of Assam. If the intent is to save the identity of the indigenous population from becoming a minority, there is no alternative but to reserve land, based on 1951 NRC.

2. 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 ST, especially the Bodos as per as the BTAD area is concerned. 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.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study titled “VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE OF BTAD IN THE ELECTIONS FROM 2004 TO 2016” has been done keeping in mind the voting behaviour of the people of BTAD in connection with the elections of MCLA, MLA and MP held in the autonomous council area from the year 2004 to 2016 just after its creation in 2003. The Bodo political party controls the Bodoland Territorial Council, an administrative set up under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which vested with territorial autonomy for governance in 40 subjects barring Home and Police, in Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD) comprising four lower Assam districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. The BTAD is 46 members house. Out of which 40 are elected from its MCLA segments and 6 are nominated by the Governor from unrepresented communities. For the election of the MLAs the BTAD covers 12 Assembly seats and also partially includes areas under four adjoining Assembly Constituencies. It covers 2 HPCs of No. 5 Kokrajhar (ST) and No. 9 Mangaldai HPC. The No.5 Kokrajhar HPC

comprises of 10 Assembly segments of Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar West (ST), Kokrajhar East (ST), Sidli (ST), Bijni, Sorbhog, Bhawanipur, Chapaguri (ST), Barama (ST) and Tamulpur. Out of these the Sorbhog and Bhawanipur Assembly segments are partially included in the BTAD area. So these Constituencies are excluded from present study. On the other hand, Mangadai HPC partially includes BTAD area as its 4 assembly segments namely – Udalguri (ST), Paneri, Majbat and Kalaigaon are included. The study does not include the Mangaldai HPC in its present study. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to generalize the results of the study as that of the BTAD as a whole.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The discussion revealed that since pre- independence period, the Bodos are the dominant group playing important role in the electoral politics of the BTAD region. During colonial period a handful of educated and politically conscious Bodos develop an urge of sharing space in electoral politics for the protection of their interest and all round development of the tribal communities. This feeling floated different political parties of tribal in different period of time. The Bodo politics began as early as 1937 gradually got its momentum from the 1967 with the rising political consciousness among the Bodos. Since, then the Bodos started ethnic assertion based on the identity and language which culminated in 1987 with the demand for separate homeland “Bodoland”.

The Bodo politics during this period reached its peak with the ABSU movement which later culminated with the BAC Accord in 1993. But soon, the BAC proved to be inadequate to fulfil the political aspiration of the Bodos. The post-BAC period, then saw the violent arms struggle by the BLT which ended with the signing of BTC Accord in 2003. This accord was a significant as it opened a window for the agitating Bodos to integrate into the mainstream politics of the state.

Since then the politics in BTAD has underwent many changes amid violence and ethnic disturbances in the areas. Notably, the electoral politics in BTAD in the first two terms has been dominated by the popular regional party BPF since its inception. But, the political climate and voting behaviour is seen seemingly changing after 2012 and 2014 with the inter-group violence and clashes. The politics of BTAD has become more complex with the divisive politics of “Bodos versus non-Bodos” in recent years. To understand the onus of the politics and conflicts in

BTAD it needs to extend one's range of overview of the history of North East and Assam in general which is a complex region drawn into the most critical and inter-connected issues like ethnic nationalism, ethnic clash, land and identity politics, illegal immigrants, illegal land encroachments, insurgencies, explosion of Muslim population, Hindu-Muslim rivalry, tribal and non-tribal rivalry for which Hilary Paisi considers North East as more complex part of India than Jammu & Kashmir. Paisi says, "For many reasons, the situation in Assam is more complex than the situation in Kashmir. That is because while Kashmir has one very important issue to be settled, Assam has many. Broadly, these issues can be divided into those that are purely internal and those that are partly internal and partly external." The fact that the illegal Bangladeshi influx into Assam since pre-independence period which has been changing the demographics of the State including the protected Tribal Belt and Block is being denied by the foresight less State and National politicians throwing a smoke screen over the public's eyes for their vote bank politics. As a whole the interplay of these complex and multifaceted issues makes the politics of BTAD complex to understand vividly. Nevertheless, the apprehension of the indigenous tribal people of being politically marginalization in their own protected land due to land alienation and encroachment should not be overlooked by the government. The government should implement the land laws and provisions of the "Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act- 1986" to ensure the tribal land rights and political interest.