

## **CHAPTER- IV**

### **ROLE OF BODO WOMEN IN POLITICS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Participation in political process is a key to women empowerment and a means for realizing the goal of gender equality. Women's participation in politics may take place in various forms-as voters and campaigners, as party workers, and as contestants in the electoral process. Among these, the most important yardstick to measure women's active political participation is the number of women contestants in the fray for elections and elected women representatives in the decision making bodies. Participation becomes meaningful and effective when the elected women exercise their political rights devoid any influence. Along with political participation, comes the question of representation. Representation in politics occurs when a women is elected to take part in the decision making bodies and is adapted to the system of policy making and its execution. But mere electoral victory of a woman may not mean real representation in the decision making bodies. She must actively be involved in the decision making processes equally with the rest of her colleagues, and importantly she must feel herself as part and parcel of the process. (Das, 2014)

Politics is the course of action by which groups of people can make decisions. It consists of social relations involving authority or power and regulations of the political units and the strategy for policy execution. Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas inspired the French Revolution, propagated women's exclusion from politics in 1762 and right to equal participation of women in politics also denied by the American Declaration of Independence. But after long years, political thinkers like John Stuart Mill advocated for gender equality in every aspects including politics. The post- Second World War period has brought about the sensitivity of gender equality and equality of sexes. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter has highlighted the equality between men and women. But till today women are victims of masculine prejudices and their

participation in politics is still marginalized (Begum, Political Participation of Women: Some Issues and Challenges, 2015).

Participation is an essential element of empowerment framework. Various international treaties and conventions such as Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN initiatives like- UN Decade for Women, UNDP's "Gender in Development Goal" and many global conferences on women, such as Mexico (1975), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995) etc. have emphasized women's participation in political (and economic) activities and decision-making process which is treated as catalyst to women empowerment (Das, Women Empowerment and Grassroot Political Institutions, An Empirical Study , 2014).

In India women represent half of the total population of the country and they have the right to half of the seats of the parliament. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the social and political activists of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who sought to bring about a revolutionary change in the status of women. 'Women' as marginalized group have been a vital concern of Gandhian thought. He was instrumental in bringing about a new dimension into the question of women empowerment. His thought on women's liberation is universal and comprehensive although it is evolved in Indian context. Gandhian approach to women empowerment is not evolved merely on theoretical basis, but on an activist note. Mahatma Gandhi appealed all women to denounce the socially created subordination, and come forward to participate in public affairs that had significance for their lives and society. Gandhi's views on women empowerment remain significant even today. He held that women's role and status was an index to the cultural level of a society. He even added that national development was linked with women's development. Mahatma Gandhi held high prestige for women. Any attempt on the part of men to degrade women's prestige was not less than any act of evil. He said, 'Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of women (Kaushik, 2006). Women's upliftment constituted one of the major components of the Gandhian strategy known as 'Constructive Programme' which aimed at bringing welfare to all. It was 'designed to build up the nation from the very bottom upward' based on non-violent and non-exploitative social order.

Article 325 and 326 of the Constitution of India guarantee political equality, equal right to participate in political activities and right to vote respectively. Lack of space for participation in political bodies has not only resulted in their presence in inadequate numbers in the decision making bodies but it also reflects negligence of their issues and experiences in the policy making. The Constitution of India is one of the most progressive documents so far as the legal rights of the women are concerned. It makes no discrimination on the basis of sex and provides equal rights to all citizens irrespective of gender (Pylee, 2002). The preamble of our Constitution starts by saying that we the people of India, give to ourselves the Constitution. The preamble contains the goal of equality of status and opportunity to all the citizens. This particular goal has been incorporated to give equal rights to women and men in terms of status as well as opportunity.

## **4.2 MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS**

India being a largest democratic country in the world incorporated best salient features in the constitution. It has adopted the principles of liberty; equality and justice that make Indian citizen feel secure with the promises of survival, equal treatment and gender equality but in contrasts it remains a dream only. The constitution though guaranteed fundamental rights and privileges but it is seen inadequate in addressing the complexities of gender discrimination and marginalization of women in different aspects. In India, 33 per cent of seats were reserved for women in local governance councils like in Municipalities, Nagar Panchayat and Village Panchayat but similar reservation has not been made in the state and national parliaments. It is to be mentioned that the principal arguments that has barred reservation at higher levels is that capture of seats by the elite class. As a result this has increased the political power of elites over the people from Other Backward Classes who are socio-economically disadvantaged (Haritas, 2008). There are several reasons on which women have been marginalized from politics. Illiteracy which is great hindrances to our society makes marginalizing effect on women. The patriarchal context of our society is a big constraint for women's non involvement in politics. The traditional role imposed on them as well as societal and cultural norms is also big hurdle for women in their political participation (Alam, 2015). Political violence and criminalization of politics is

very much prevalent in our society, thus ordinary women's mindset has developed a sense of apathy or dislike in participating politics which has a marginalizing effect on them.

### **4.3 STATUS OF INDIAN WOMEN DURING 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

The status of women was far from being satisfactory during 19<sup>th</sup> century. The total isolation of women has brought about their mental and physical degeneration. In different parts of India, the Purdah system had become a long established practice among the Muslims especially in the north and east. The freedom and positions which women enjoyed were beyond the imagination. For long years under the Muhammadan rule there had been developed apathy towards the women. There was no such opportunity for girl child to go to any educational institutions (Karthika & Suganya, 2016). Gradually, the problems of society's behaviour towards women in India have come under the attention of Western humanitarian thinkers, Christian missionaries and Indian socio-religious reformers. Under the banner of socio-religious reform movements, the reformers raised their voice against the evil practices of Indian societies towards women such as Sati, Child marriage, Prohibition of widow remarriage, Polygamy and Dowry system. Many Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak, Behramji Malabari who were fought against the cruel practices of Indian society towards women (Prashar, Women and social reform movements in modern India, 2017). Thus, the strong and practical efforts made by the social reformers created awareness on the necessity of elevation of women economically and then socially and mitigated the social sufferings of women.

### **4.4 FORMATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION**

The History of women associations in India symbolizes an enormous difference between the women of nineteenth century and the women of twentieth century. In the beginning the movements for social reforms were meant for improving the social position of women in Indian society. Women started and taken up the issue of 'Change' which were meant to change in public life like equality inheritance rights and issues relating to domestic violence, dowry, polygamy and widow remarriage etc. Women

gradually came out from their houses and started participating in various activities of social, religious and political associations. They adopted some strategy to resolve their various hindrances which were resulted in the formation of different associations. The National Social Conference of 1887 was the first of its kind and other such organizations were gradually came into existence like, Arya Mahila Samaj (The Arian Women's Association), Bharat Mahila Parishad (Ladies Social Conference), Srti Zarthosti Mandal (Parsi Women's Circle), Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam (The Muslim Women's Association). Other than these organizations, there were three major women's organizations, the Women's India Association (WIA) in 1917, the National Council for Women in India (NCWI) in 1925 and All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927. All these organizations were formed in between 1917 to 1927 by the women after Second World War. At that time the struggle against colonial rule for national freedom was intensified. Women have showed vigorous participation in the freedom movement paving the way for some 'women's only' organizations (Prashar, Women and social reform movements in modern India, 2017).

Thus, gradually these activities of women's organizations create a platform for women to participate in politics in the period of freedom movement. Formations of these women's organizations made realized the needs and demands of women's. They fought for political rights and equality with men.

#### **4.5 PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA'S FREEDOM MOVEMENT**

The history and phases of Indian freedom struggle against British rule would be incomplete without recalling the contributions of women. Their role in the freedom struggle is exceptionally significant and occupied foremost place. Women were fought with true spirit and brave courage where they faced extreme tortures and exploitations to gain freedom for the country. Women came forward and took the charge of struggle when most of the men freedom fighters were in prison. Women's participation in Indian's freedom movement began as early as in 1817 when Bhima Bay Holkar fought bravely against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him in the guerrilla warfare. The name of Rani Laxshmi Bhai of Jhansi who laid the example of real patriotism and

heroism for the cause of the nation can not be forgotten. Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Vijay Laxshmi Pandit, Annie Besant and others were remembered even today for their selfless contribution both in battlefield as well as political field (Kaur, 2013).

The participation of women came into being when Gandhiji mobilized the large number of women during the Non Co-operation Movement (NCM) in 1920. Gandhiji deliberately involved women in the challenge of the struggle for national independence. Women's activities in public domain were visualized by Gandhiji for a supportive role for women during the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Women's participation in Quit India Movement of 1942 was most significant in the history of India's freedom struggle. Women leaders were given the responsibility of directing and taking forward in the movement and they were also participated in the underground revolutionary activities (Singh, 2015). Thus, women's participation in the India's freedom movement inspired base of women movement in India. Their participation in freedom movement not only strengthened the women's struggle for national freedom but also brought a sense of contestation and contraction of patriarchal society.

#### **4.6 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA**

Participation of women in politics is essential as a demand of simple justice as well as necessary condition of human existence. During pre-independent period women suffrage was raised by many women leaders likes Saraladevi Choudharani, Margaret E. Cousins, Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and others. A women delegation had come forward with their demands for voting rights in December, 1917 and met Edwin Montague, Secretary of State in India and placed their demands. Margaret E. Cousins had come forward with much enthusiasm and pleaded for granting same suffrage rights to women as granted to their brothers. The issue was raised further by the Saraladevi Chaudharani in her proposals before the Montague-Chelmsford team in December, 1918 (Khanna, 2009).

The British Government despite receiving the demands from women's delegation committee, they thought that this demand was quite preposterous because women in most of the western countries had still not been given the right to vote in spite of their prolonged struggle. However, the Government of India Act, 1919 incorporated

some provisions for women's voting right to be settled by the provincial administration. Henceforth the Madras and Bombay Legislative Council in 1921 and thereafter United Provinces in 1923, Punjab and Bengal in 1926, Assam, Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa Council in 1930 that all of the legislative areas of India had conferred the symbol and instrument of equal citizenship with men on women along with adult suffrage (Kishwar, 1996).

With India attaining independence from British rule in 1947, our Constitution guaranteed equality before law and equal protection of law and no discrimination on the grounds of sex. The constitution also empowered the states to make special provisions for women and children to provide for securing just and humane conditions of work. The National Commission for Women was set up to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women by an Act of Parliament in 1990. As the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India which have provided for reservation of seats for women in the local bodies like Panchayats and Municipalities, empowering them a strong foundation for their participation in the decision process at grass root levels but none will lift an honest finger to ensure equal representation. Women were prevented from creating their own leadership and also obstructed from the policy making decisions which treated them subordinate to men and continuation of gender subjugation (Begum, Political Participation of Women: Some Issues and Challenges, 2015). Thus, marginalization of women and hypocritical efforts of mainstreaming them into the key political process play a detrimental role in their political participation. It has been really difficult for those women who are coming out from the middle class household and to hold the key political steps. There is no doubt that there are several women who are holding key positions in different political levels but their political participation is not encouraging though they have given the size of their share in the electoral and population perspective, as they cannot exercise their rights and enjoy liberties till they are given their due share. Therefore, this is the reason why their presence is hardly felt when important policies and decisions for the welfare of the women or countries are made.

## 4.7 WOMEN AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Women's active participation in electoral process is an important marker of the maturity and efficacy of democracy in any country of the world today. The participation of women in political process not only comprises interactions in elections but it also involves in trade unions, co-operatives women's collectives, informal and formal politics to the broader perspectives. The historical views of women's rights and participation of women in electoral politics can be traced its origin to the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal in 1905-08 which was marked the beginning of the Indian women's participation in nationalist activities and also brought the question of women's suffrage and voting rights to the forefront. The post-independence period did not witness much united efforts to create inclusive electoral spaces for women though India achieved its ever written Constitution in 1950. But, the constitution did not incorporate the reservation seats for women. Women's participation in Politics seems to be declined after independence in relation to the participation of freedom struggle. Women's issues were neglected and especially the political parties failed to address their grievances and excluded them from political participation. However, as an outcome and contribution of women during freedom struggle, some political parties allotted few seats for women in the general election (Rai, Women's Participation in Electoral Politics in India: Silent Feminisation, 2017).

Table 4.1: Representation of Women in Lok Sabha 1952-2014

Lok Sabha	Total no. of Seats	Women Members who Won	% of total
First (1952)	489	22	4.4
Second (1957)	494	27	5.4
Third (1962)	494	34	6.7
Fourth (1967)	523	31	5.9
Fifth (1971)	521	22	4.2
Sixth (1977)	544	19	3.4
Seventh (1980)	544	28	5.1
Eight (1984)	544	44	8.1
Ninth (1989)	529	28	5.3



Tenth (1991)	509	36	7.0
Eleventh (1996)	541	40*	7.4
Twelfth (1998)	545	44*	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	543	48*	8.8
Fourteenth (2004)	543	45*	8.1
Fifteenth (2009)	543	59	10.9
Sixteenth (2014)	543	61	11.2

Source: *Election Commission of India, New Delhi* accessed from [www.researchgate.net.com](http://www.researchgate.net.com) on 22.09.2017

It is thus evident from the above table that during the first Lok Sabha election in 1952, women could win only and occupied miserably 4.4 per cent of the total seats in the Lower House of the parliament.

There are always inherent barriers and restrictions imposed by the political parties that harshly affect their chances of candidature at the time of election. The numbers of seats allotted by the three political parties in the last three general elections has clearly shown the evidence that they have been discriminated in the electoral process as candidates.

Table 4.2: Seats Allotted to Women in Recent General Elections

National Parties	2004		2009		2014	
	Contested	Won	Contested	Won	Contested	Won
<b>All India</b>	355	45	556	59	668	61
Congress	45	12	43	23	57	4
BJP	30	10	44	13	37	28
Others	280	23	469	23	574	29

Source: *Election Commission of India, New Delhi*, accessed from [www.researchgate.net.com](http://www.researchgate.net.com) on 22.09.2017

The number of women candidates from different political parties who contested general elections has more than doubled from 280 in 2004 to 574 in 2014. However, the political parties played discriminatory attitude towards women while distributing tickets to them in the Lok Sabha election which has discouraging affects on women's active participation in politics. The decisions of political parties for not allotting seats to women at the national and state level electoral process have been attributed to women's lack of winning capacity in the elections.

Women participation in formal politics are determined by a host of factors some which are gender specific in nature and universal while some are country specific and localized. In India, it has been suggested that women's participation in electoral process is usually lower than that of men because they have been either socialized differently or they because they have fewer resources. The differences of turnout of men's and women's have been shown in the following.

Table 4.3: Turnout of Women Voters in General Election in India

General Elections	Total Turnout	Men's Turnout	Women's Turnout	Difference in Turnout
First (1952)	61.2	-	-	-
Second (1957)	62.2	-	-	-
Third (1962)	55.4	63.3	46.6	16.7
Fourth (1967)	61.3	66.7	55.5	11.2
Fifth (1971)	55.3	60.9	49.1	11.8
Sixth (1977)	60.5	66.0	54.9	11.1
Seventh (1980)	56.9	62.2	51.2	11.0
Eight (1984)	64.0	68.4	59.2	9.2
Ninth (1989)	62.0	66.1	57.3	8.8
Tenth (1991)	57.0	61.6	51.4	10.2
Eleventh (1996)	58.0	62.1	53.4	8.7
Twelfth (1998)	62.0	66.0	58.0	8.0
Thirteenth (1999)	60.0	64.0	55.7	8.3
Fourteenth (2004)	58.8	61.7	53.3	8.4

Fifteenth (2009)	58.2	60.2	55.8	4.4
Sixteenth (2014)	66.4	67.1	65.6	1.5

*Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi, accessed from [www.researchgate.net.com](http://www.researchgate.net.com) on 22.09.2017*

There has been a visible upsurge of women as voters in election and achieving parity with male voters recently, seems to be determined by several factors influencing the engagement and non engagement of women in the voting system (Rai, Electoral Participation of Women in India: Key Determinants and Barriers , 2011). In the above table, the women's turnout in the 2014 generally election has shown highest, narrowing down the gender gap of participation which indicates that civil society, political parties including Election Commission of India has created awareness among the women voters. The key reason that propels a large number of women to vote in the general elections is their enthusiasm to participate in the politics.

#### **4.8 POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE BODOS**

The growth and development in the field of socio-economic and political aspects among Bodos were emerged due to their underdevelopment and backwardness. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, various tribal organizations emerged to meet up the issues related to them. The tribal communities like Chutiyas, Morans and the Kacharis led to the emergence of various tribal organizations where Bodo community also started their interest on political consciousness. These newly emerged tribal organizations were made various attempts to develop the conditions of tribal communities and to improve their backwardness. These organizations were also tried to reform the social practices of their communities (Deka, 2009).

The attempts among the plain tribes were started with the submission of the memorandum to Simon Commission in 1929 in Shillong when Simon Commission arrived in Assam. Through this memorandum they have submitted their demands on various grievances and aspirations of the tribal communities. Along with that the Bodo Kochari is one among the tribal communities who submitted memorandum to the Commission. The Commission accordingly took into the consideration of the

memorandum submitted by the Bodo community of Goalpara district along with other backward tribes. They have demanded for a second chamber in the Legislative Council to the Commission and urged not to transfer the Goalpara district to Bengal (Kalita, 2018).

In the development of identity consciousness among the Bodos, Kalicharan Brahma played a remarkable role who was born at Kajigaon on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1860. The economic condition of the Bodo people was very meager and they were underdeveloped. He believes that the main reasons behind this condition were division among the Bodos on the basis of religion. Kalicharan Brahma thus tried to unite the Bodo people under one religion and that was “Brahma Religion or *Brahma Dharma*”. He was called Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma for his reformation of Bodo society. In the year 1924, with the initiatives of Kalicharan Brahma the first ever Bodo Magazine “*Bibar*” which means ‘flower’ in Bodo was published. The magazine took active part in focusing the socio-economic conditions and brought identity consciousness among the Bodos (Lohit Ch. Baishya, 2017).

Tribal League which was formed in the year 1933 played a significant role in bringing about political consciousness particularly among plains tribal. The objective of the Tribal League was to create political consciousness among the plains tribal of Assam. The Tribal League took strong initiative for the reservation of seats for the tribal people in Provincial Legislative Assembly. Accordingly, the Government of India Act, 1935 reserved four numbers of seats for the plains tribal of Assam during the British rule (Bhuyan, 2006). The Tribal League fought for many issues for the cause of the tribal community. They have demanded the amendment of the Assam Land and Revenue Act, 1886 and which was amended accordingly in the 1947 and added Chapter X of the Act. Thus as per the provision of the Act, section 160 (1) of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment Act, 1947, the constitution of compact areas in regions predominantly people by classes of people notified under Section 160 (2) of the above act (to be referred as protected classes henceforth) into Belts and Blocks. The areas which are constituted with larger boundary are called Belts and the smaller areas considering with boundaries of the Mauzas are called Blocks. Accordingly, there are 35

Belts and Blocks were created in Assam till 1964 in accordance with the section provided in the Act, out of which 11 were Belts and 24 were Blocks (Bordoloi, 1999).

The Tribal League did not play a role of political party though they fought for long time for the cause and issues of the tribal people. But, gradually the internal dispute among the tribal leaders led others to joint in some other political which was a setback for the League. The Tribal League then changed their nomenclature and rename as 'All Assam Tribal Sangha in the Baropujia Annual Session in 1953. The Tribal Sangha continued their efforts on the protection and promotion of tribal community till today (Sonowal, 2013).

The birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) has played significant role in awakening and developing of identity consciousness among the Bodos in later period (Gupta, 2014). The Bodo Sahitya Sabha which was formed in 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1952 with aims and objectives of imparting education through Mother tongue, to introduce Bodo Language as medium of instruction in the institutions and to preserve the Bodo Culture etc (George, 1994). The BSS was formed under the strong and able leadership of Joy Badra Hagjer, Satish Chandra Basumatary, Promod Chandra Boro, Dharanidhar Basumatary, Rupnath Brahma, Modaram Brahma and many others and accordingly Joy Badra Hagjer and Sonaram Taosen became President and Secretary of the BSS. The Sahitya Sabha continued their working on the promotion and development of the Bodo language like the works done by Assam Sahitya Sabha. The BSS continued their efforts and demanded introduction of Bodo MIL in the Higher Education standard and opening of Bodo departments in the Universities of Assam. The constant demands of the Sabha resulted recognition of Bodo Language as an Associate Official Language of the State by the Government of Assam and accorded Bodo Language under the 8<sup>th</sup> Scheduled of Indian Constitution and these has led more consciousness among the Bodos (Lohit Ch. Baishya, 2017).

Thus, the BSS continued their working on Bodo language, literature as well as culture and kept submitting various memorandums and demands to different Authorities of both Central and State Government in different time to consolidate the base of the Bodo language and literature with articulating Bodo aspirations.

### **4.8.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

The position of Bodos during pre-independent period is difficult to analyze. It is well known that the Bodos who are called Kacharis of Indo-Mongoloid stock and the earliest settler in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Rev. Sidney Endle who published the first ethnographic account of the Bodos in 1911, referred them as Kachari. Accordingly, this Bodo community has been recognized as Scheduled tribe after independence. The term Kachari and Bodo interchangeably has been used by the European scholars like Hodgson (1828) and Grierson (1903). He also further mentioned that the generic term Bodo was first used by Hodgson to refer a group of languages (Basumatary K. , Political Economy of Bodo Movement: A Human Development Perspective, 2012).

It has been observed that the existence of the Bodos was on the brink of extinction historically prior to the colonial period. They were somewhat unconscious about the social, economic and political status. Since the time immemorial, Bodos were living with their traditional social structure and remained aloofness from other social process. Accordingly, the modern system of civilization that established by the British India has thoroughly changed the traditional mindset of the Indian people in general and particularly to the Bodos as well. Under the new liberal policy and democratic rule set by the Britishers, the Bodo people also developed the sense of identity consciousness and self respect as well as consciousness towards their community. Gradually, they started to realize their lost identity of history, culture, tradition, custom and language etc. and tried to reassert their community identity. But, many Bodo people, during the British rule have already assimilated and converted to greater Assamese community for which their population has been reduced in the census subsequently even after the independence (Roy, 1995).

It is to be further, mentioned that during British rule, the Bodos were first raised the issue of a separate electoral roll for the Bodo people along with other hill tribes of north-east India. In 1929, Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma along with other members of the Kachari Yubak Committee submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in

Shillong, demanding safeguard for the Kochari community which would ensure them an independent identity. Subsequently, in 1933 the formation of All Assam Plains Tribal League has encouraged and made them conscious among the tribal communities for asserting their identity in Assam. Gradually, this consciousness took a distinct form and developed to the level of demanding for the social, political and economic upliftment of Bodos (Basumatary K. , Political Economy of Bodo Movement: A Human Development Perspective, 2012).

#### **4.8.2 POST- INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

In the Post-Colonial era, the Plain tribes of Assam could not get the protective measures in the form of autonomy or an autonomous district council like the hill tribes rather they felt deprived of enjoying many social and political opportunities. The policy of language imposition in 1950's, by the Assam Government and the movement for language of 1960 and 1972 of the dominant language towards the undermining the minority language group has brought changes in the social and political situation of Assam. The plain tribal living in the Brahmaputra valley especially the Bodos started to agitate from the late 1960's with a new enthusiasm for asserting their identity and to get autonomy from their socio-economic and cultural miserable conditions (Barthakur, 1995).

The domination of mainstream community over other community especially to the tribal groups in the field of socio-economic conditions has created political mobilization in the form of sub nationalism as a strong force of political consciousness among them. Therefore, the Bodo sub-nationality was emerged within the mainstream community of Assam due to some versatile reasons such as negligence of governmental machinery etc. (Banerjee & Roy, 2010).

Apart from due crumble of colonialism as well as with the emergence of new societies in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Asia and Africa has brought great changes in the political stage. The status of these countries remained politically dependent, technologically backward and economically oppressed. Hence, in India particularly in Assam, the Bodo tribal group has not been free in these aspects, as they were also dominated by other main stream community in the region. Their voiced for

development in social, economic and political fields were some of the prospects of their struggle for autonomy from different suppression and oppression (Basumatary K. , 2012).

Bodos as the largest plain tribal group in the banks of Brahmaputra valley of Assam have been playing significant role in the state politics of Assam. But, their political role have been alienated and neglected as well as discriminated long time by the governments. After India's independence, Bodos have realized the need of self identity and determination of social and cultural rights. Hence, in the need of time All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) a student organization was formed in 1967 with an objective of promoting language, literature and culture along with safeguarding economic and political issues of the Bodos (Baishya & Das, Bodo Politics For Identity Assertion: A Study, 2017). Thereafter, ABSU which become most influential organization among the Bodos has started agitation for a separate homeland of the Bodos. Accordingly, they have launched a vigorous movement from 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1987 and it has gained mass support from the corners of the Bodo dominated areas like Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Darrang and Udalguri in which these places have become the centre of movement activities of Bodos (Basumata, 2011). Thus, with the strong movement of ABSU under the leadership of Late Upendra Nath Brahma and other Bodo leaders, Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) accord was signed in 1993, but this accord could not fulfill the genuine demands and aspiration of the Bodo people and hence ABSU continued their struggle for greater autonomy and consequently in 10 February, 2003 another Bodo Accord was signed between the Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) accordingly Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was formed within the state of Assam to provide constitutional safeguard under the provision of sixth scheduled of the Indian constitution to fulfill socio-cultural, economic, educational and ethnic identity needs of the Bodos along with preservation of land rights and infrastructure development of the BTC region (Pegu, 2004).



## 4.9 POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE BODO WOMEN

The Bodos are the most distinctive community of the different ethnic groups living in the north eastern part of India particularly in the north bank of Brahmaputra valley. The Bodo through the pages of history has the evidence of participating in the different social and political events. Bodo women like other women in India has also participated in the freedom struggle. Their participation in protecting the nation and their land has been seen from the past. Bodo women took active part in protecting the Bodo nationality during British rule as well. Women like Gambari Sikla, a tax collector of Bamunkura, Birgwshri (Thangphakri), a tax collector of Bijni Duar and Belshri, a messenger of Raja Iragdao, the then king of Bodos, were the examples of brave Bodo women who worked in different activities as well as stood against the inhuman treatment of Britishers for which they had to lost their lives (Narzary, Role of Bodo Women in Bodoland Movement and Its Political Empowerment, 2015).

The effort of Gurudev Karicharan Brahma for women empowerment began from the first *mahasannmelan* held at Bhawraguri, Gossaigaon in the year 1921 adopted several resolutions for the socio-economic development of the society in general and for the development of women in particular. The *sannmelan* resolved to form a Mahila Samittee (women's committee) and sub-committees to bring women to the forefront of the society. It was the first step to bring the women in the process of welfare works in a dominated society. For the first time women could become the active critics of the society who could forward their views for the welfare of the society. The *sannmelan* also decided to publish a monthly journal to express the views of the upcoming students and to critically discuss the various aspects of the society. It was also decided to open primary schools in every village to educate the boys and girls. It was believed that achieving education is the basis of any kind of advancement and empowerment. It was decided to avoid liquor in the wedding ceremony and feasts. The most important decision of the conference was to settle the amount of bride-price to be paid to the parents of the bride. It was fixed to Rupees fifty one only. If any parents demanded more than the preset amount, they would have to pay penalty to the Boro Samaj. These

are the significant pronouncement of the *sanmelan* towards the women empowerment (Brahma S. , 2017).

The All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) was formed in 1986 under the direct initiative of the leaders like Upendra Nath Brahma, Sansuma Kungur Bwiswmuthiary, Subhash Basumatary and Daorao Dekreb Narzary. It is mentioned in the AATWWF's constitution that "It is considered expedient to form a federation of the folk belongings to all tribal groups of entire Assam to unite themselves in a common platform through mutual understandings being imbibed in a common ideology with a view to fight for ensuring rights and justice of the tribal women in the spheres of socio-economic, political, educational, cultural and for their emancipation from their socio-domestic drudgery and thereby to enable themselves in rendering services to the common welfare and preservation of the indigenous self identity of all tribal groups living in Assam." The aims and objectives of the AATWWF were formulated. Accordingly, social, ethnic and women issues of northeast Indian tribes were highlighted along with Bodo community. But for the first six years, AATWWF did not have its own programmes, instead they worked for the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU). Under the direct instruction of ABSU, the AATWWF (ABWWF) has involved in different activities of the Bodoland Movement (Chaudhuri, The Bodo Movement and Women Participation , 2004).

The AATWWF changed its name to All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993. The new name was more acceptable to them as all of its members belonged to the Bodo community. But this also meant, it was not well received by the women of other tribal communities living in Assam as most activities were done under the influence of ABSU and for the Bodoland movement. Gradually, ABWWF has brought consciousness among the Bodo women and encouraged them to participate in different social and political activities.

#### **4.10 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF BODO WOMEN**

The participation of Bodo women in the field of political history can be seen from their involvement in the Roman Script movement in 1974-75 which was led by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS). The Bodo community which is the largest tribal group in

the North east India felt deprived of enjoying fundamental rights and political rights after the Independence of India though guaranteed in the constitution. They claimed that have been deprived of enjoying equal status, equal opportunity and equal development in different aspects. They have struggled for safeguarding their language, literature and culture and also to achieve political autonomy. The aspiration and feelings of asserting their identity took momentum in the mindset of the Bodo people. Accordingly, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha decided to launch a vigorous movement against the State and Central Government where participation of Bodo women seen in large number during the movement which was considered as language movement (Swargiary, Boro, & Narzaree, 2015).

The participation of Bodo women in politics can be observed from two different perspectives considering their involvement. It can be observed that since, the inception of the constitution in 1952, Bodo people though enjoyed voting right as their constitutional right but their exercise in the voting right was poor specially the women. The demand for a separate homeland under the leadership of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) brought a sense of political consciousness among the Bodos in general and women in particular. In the late 1980's under the banner of ABSU a massive agitation was started demanding for the formation of a separate state known as 'Bodoland' in the north bank of Brahmaputra valley. The ABSU declared formally the starting of a democratic and Gandhian peaceful mass movement on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1987. The Bodoland movement took the shape of a mass movement under the leadership of ABSU led by Upendra Nath Brahma who was the president of ABSU and He took active role in mobilizing the people on the issue of separate state Bodoland for the Bodos (Choudhury, Bodo Women in Peace Building: A Case Study of Kokrajhar District, 2017).

The ABSU movement carried out with two different ideologies- one is with non-violent way through processions, organizing mass rallies, protest rallies, hunger strike, road blockade etc. and the another way was violent in nature. The ABSU formed a underground wing called Volunteer Force (ABSU VF) to carry out armed struggle (Mosahari, 2011). Phukan Chandra Boro and in the later period Preamsingh Brahma were the in-charge of the wing. They were chosen as 'Chairman' of the wing and they

were both former executive members of the ABSU. They were actively participated in the movement from the beginning. They worked as an action force of the ABSU. Their actions were violent in nature like bombing, kidnapping, killing, dacoity to collect money and arms and firing on the security personnel, etc. During the movement period they were worked as soldiers for the Bodos. In 1989, the ABSU and the Volunteer Force leaders expressed their concerned on the need of women to train in arms. After witnessing men's struggle for the cause of the Bodoland, the Bodo women too eager to join in arms training and they have been inspired by the speeches and activities done by the Upendra Nath Brahma. Accordingly, the women joined in the Volunteer Force from 1989 onwards but they were not involved in the direct action. Women were taught to use the rifles for their self defense and safety. They were trained to carry informations and messages from one place to another where male were unable to go. Many girls from different places were given nursing training in rural primary health centers for taking care of their family in absence of male members. Since, male were have to abscond from the police atrocities. But the joining of women in VF was not encouraged by some AATWWF members. Some women members criticized the idea on the ground that they were doubtful about the marital future of Bodo girls (Chaudhuri, 2004).

#### **4.10.1 FORMATION OF BODO WOMEN ORGANIZATION**

It is really important to be mentioned that when the struggle for political autonomy for the Bodo people took vigorous step under the leadership of ABSU, then many Bodo intellectuals as well as senior citizens led by ABSU felt that Bodo women should not be excluded in the process as they could play a vital role to the contribution and general welfare of the Boro society. Thereafter, a consensus decision was come to form an organization for the women. Accordingly the organization was formed in the name and style of 'All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation' at Debargaon, Kokrajhar on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1986 with the objectives of bringing equality between men and women, addressing various problems relating women and empowerment of women in socio-economic and political activities. Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma, the present Minister of Assam Government was the founder President of the organization (Choudhury, Bodo Women in Peace Building: A Case Study of Kokrajhar District, 2017).

Upendra Nath Brahma along with Sansuma Kungur Bwiswmuthiary, Subhash Basumatary and Daorao Dekreb Narzary of the ABSU took the direct initiatives in forming of the AATWWF. It is stated that in the AATWWF's constitution "It is considered expedient to form a federation of the women folk belonging to all tribal groups of the entire Assam to unite themselves in a common platform through mutual understandings being imbibed in a common ideology with a view to fight for ensuring rights and justice of the tribal women in the spheres of socio-economic, political, educational, cultural and for their emancipation from their socio-domestic work and thereby to enable themselves in rendering services to the promotion, preservation and welfare of the indigenous self identity of all tribal groups living in Assam" (Chaudhuri, *The Bodo Movement and Women Participation*, 2004).

ABSU intensified Bodoland movement and the organization gradually turn to seen as specifically one set for the Bodo community and active involvement for the autonomous Bodoland and for which other tribal women felt alienated and distances themselves from AATWWF. This consequence resulted changing of the nomenclature from AATWWF to All Bodo Women Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in the Third Annual Conference of the federation held at Tamulpur in 1993. The conference selected Mrs. Pramila Rani Brahma as President and Mrs. Malati Rani Narzary as the Secretary of the Federation. Mrs. Kanan Basumatary who was former President of the federation reveals that ABWWF was the first Bodo women organization in Assam where each and every Bodo women of Kokrajhar district were the members of the organization and involved at the peak hour of the Bodoland movement. Accordingly under the banner of ABWWF the Bodo women folk played a significant role in the struggle for the Bodoland movement.

#### **4.10.2 ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN**

The ABWWF played a significant role in bringing consciousness of Bodo women in the field of socio-economic problems, their civil rights and for the overall development. ABWWF took interest in awakening consciousness among the Bodo women to participate in the Bodoland movement from the very beginning. The organization, in the initial period took up the issue of mothers that all mothers should take the responsibility of taking care of their children, educating them, family planning,

health and hygiene and prohibition of taking alcohol and eradication of practice of polygamy. During the agitation for Bodoland movement many Bodo women of Kokrajhar district from different villages acted as informants and carrying messages and letters from one place to another on behalf of the ABSU. Some women got nursing training for first aid treatment and also treatment for minor illness. They also prepared foods for ABSU members sometimes in the meetings and in other occasions. The actual purpose for the formation of this organization was to spread the messages as well as aims and objectives of the ABSU movement in all Bodo dominated areas to bring about the political consciousness among the Bodo women (Narzary, Role of Bodo Women in Bodoland Movement and Its Political Empowerment, 2015).

During movement many men and young boys were taken away from the villages, ring wells were poisoned, glass objects were mixed in food grains, women were beaten up too and tortured and there were frequent incidents of attempted rapes by the police personnel. The incident of Bhumka rape case on 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1988 under the Kokrajhar district where 10 Bodo women aged from 13 years to 50 years were raped by the Assam Police and CRPF jawans was a horrific incident that shocked everyone in the society. For this notorious gang raped ABWWF fought the case in Gauhati High Court against Assam Police to punish the culprit (Brahma K. , 2013).

The women folk of Kokrajhar district under the leadership of ABWWF went out to the street and organized protests rallies in a democratic way whenever police atrocities took place upon the people. In many occasions Bodo women gheroad police vehicles and tried to save them from police apprehension while they were ploughing in the field as well as when they went out for market. In many times, when women were sat on Dharna and protest, they have been sustained severe physical injuries while some of them felled prey of police bullets. It is really proved that Helena Basumatary aged 15 years and Gaide Basumatary aged 32 years who were the first Bodo women female martyrs in the history of Bodoland movement were gunned down by the Assam police on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1988 at Soraibil under Kokrajhar district. The ABWWF encouraged Bodo women folk to involve in the struggle for separate state Bodoland and they mobilized by visiting in each and every Bodo villages sometimes without food and water and telling the people not to lose patience and to follow the democratic and peaceful way to make

the movement successful (Chaudhuri, *The Bodo Movement and Women Participation* , 2004) .

### **4.10.3 WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACE BUILDING AND DISPUTE RESOLUTIONS**

Bodo women played an important role in positive peace building and dispute resolution. During the time of Bodoland movement many Bodo women particularly from Kokrajhar district came out from their homes and joined in the struggle. In 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1989 some of the five Bodo women were cycling to Siliguri and reached Delhi to meet the then President of India R. Venkataraman and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with a mission of bringing peace in the Bodo areas. The Bodo women requested them to bring a permanent solution of the Bodo problems and to bring peace in the society. In 1996 when there was ethnic clash between Bodo and Adivasi Community, the Bodo women particularly the members of the ABWWF visited the relief camps and affected areas and made a discussion with the Adivasi leaders with the help of Police forces. They faced lot of hardships while trying to bring peace and normalcy between the two communities (Choudhury, *Bodo Women in Peace Building: A Case Study of Kokrajhar District*, 2017).

On the other hand, the Bodo Women Justice Forum (BWJF) which was formed in 1993, 20<sup>th</sup> February working on the issues of peace and human rights in the Bodoland Territorial Areas Districts. The organization was established with the vision of bringing awareness among the Bodo women about the rights and upliftment of the women by Anjali Daimary. They have been launching movement against imposition of Armed Forces Special Power Act which is in operation in the North-Eastern States. Bodo women were suffered during the conflict situation and their rights are violated by both the security personnel and military organization. BWJF took protests march programme on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 demonstrating with 'Rape Us' inscribed on their backs and chests against the rape of two young girls in Udalguri district by the CRPF Jawan an appealed to Government of India to take strict action against the culprit. In 2012 when community clash took between the Bodo and Muslim in Kokrajhar and some parts of

BTAD area, both BWJF and ABWWF took initiatives to bring normalcy and peace in the affected areas. BWJF was also a founder member of Bodo National Convention (BNC) formed in 2012 with the aim of bringing peace and harmony in the region along with reuniting different Bodo groups.

The BWJF and ABWWF intervened on the different occasions to defuse the tensions between the different political rival groups during election times. Both ABWWF and BWJF have been involved in the peace process and insisting Government of India and Government of Assam to have a fruitful dialogue with NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland) across the table and to bring permanent solution of the Bodo problems.

#### **4.11 BODO WOMEN IN STATE AND BTC ELECTORAL POLITICS**

The participation of women in electoral politics through casting of their votes or by contesting election is increasing day by day. The Bodo women have been exercising their adult franchise since 1952 when the first general election was held in India. In the beginning, the participation of Bodo women in politics was started only with as voters. According to Mrs. Hirabai Narzary, former ABWWF leader, prior to 1996 no Bodo women have been elected to any legislative assembly. It was only Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma, the present Minister of Assam Government who has been elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly for the first time in 1996 from 30 East Kokrajhar (ST) Constituency. It was quite negligible that Bodo women could not participate in the political system which was within the 10-20% in all rural areas till the Assembly election of 1985. The participation of Bodo women voters increased upto 30% in 1985 Assembly election due to AGP factor in the state. As ABSU decided to launch its vigorous movement from 1987 for separate Bodoland for the Bodo people and that situation has brought more consciousness among the Bodo people in the field of politics. In the meantime, the emergence of underground militant organization and sudden demise of Upendra Nath Brahma who was popular leader of ABSU and Bodo people led ABSU leadership to sign the 'Bodo Accord' on February 20, 1993 with Hiteswar Saikia Ministry (Sarmah, 2000).



In the Assam Assembly election held in 1991, the participation of Bodo voters was very poor due to disturbed political situations. After the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) in 1993 under the leadership of Late Premshing Brahma though certain political solution has achieved but it was felt that this accord could not fulfilled the aspirations and genuine demands of the Bodo people. Accordingly, the autonomy movement has further escalated. 1996 the underground militant organization Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) has been formed and late Chilagang Basumatary was become Chairman of the Force.

Gradually, under the total domination of ABSU as an external organization and BLTF as an underground organization, the movement for separate homeland within the Indian Union has been escalated. The movement has gained high momentum at the time and has got popular support among the mass Bodo community which the movement turned violent to some extent. As a consequences, the large number of Bodo voters abstained from the exercising of their franchisee in the 1996 Assembly election too. According to Sri Daorao Dekreb Narzary, former ABSU leader and ex-EM, BAC, the point of towards intensifying Bodoland Movement was the 'Bodo Accord of 1993'. The Bodo leaders not in a mood to compromise their movement and they have been continuing the movements through various mean ways and demanded early solution of the Bodo problem.

Later, with the initiative of Vajpayee led NDA Government at the Centre and Tarun Gogoi led Congress Government in the state; the 'Bodo Accord' was signed between Centre, State and BLT along with ABSU leaders on February, 10, 2003. Accordingly the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) came into being in 2003 and Hagrama Mohilary became interim Chief of the Council. In 2006 State Assembly Election, a pre-election alliance was made between State Congress leadership and with the Bodo's political party called Bodoland People's Front (BPF) to the extent of seat sharing. As a result the voters turn up in the Bodo dominated areas was remarkably good in the 2006 State Assembly election and the turnout of average of Bodo voters in the election was 68.6% whereas in case of female it was 59.2% which shown much improvement than the previous assembly election (Sarmah A. , 2010).

Table 4.4: Women's Representation in Assam Legislative Assembly, 1952-2016

Year of Election	No. of contestants		Elected Candidates		Seats in Assam Assembly
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1952	452	6	107	1	108
1957	303	6	103	5	108
1962	405	4	101	4	105
1967	478	6	122	4	126
1972	510	12	118	8	126
1978	938	22	125	1	126
1983	464	3	107	2	126
1985	1226	29	122	4	126
1991	1600	50	121	5	126
1996	1183	45	120	6	126
2001	854	53	116	10	126
2006	927	70	113	13	126
2011	896	85	112	14	126
2016	973	91	118	8	126
Total	-	482	-	85	-

*Source: Statistical Report, Chief Electoral Officer, Assam 2012 and published by Assam Legislative Assembly based on the Notification No. 308/AS-LA/2016 dated 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2016, Dispur, Guwahati.*

The above table clearly shows that the positions of the women in the State Assembly Election were not fairly represented. From 1952 to till 2016 only 85 female legislatures were elected to the Assembly and the total numbers of female candidates were 482. It is revealed that there was gradual increase in the number of female contestant but it is really negligible in compare to the male contestants. In 2016 Assembly election out of 91 female candidates only 8 was successful. Accordingly, out of that 8 elected female candidates 2 legislatures were Smt. Kamali Basumatary who was elected from 64 Paneri Constituency and Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma who was elected from 30 East Kokrajhar (ST) constituency and they were only the elected Bodo

women legislature in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma who won the ticket from BPF party and presently Cabinet Minister of the BJP led Government in Assam is the only Bodo women legislature from the Kokrajhar district (Saha, 2013). However, Dr. Anjali Prabha Daimary, who is also the president of All Bodo Women Justice Forum (BWJF) contested from Udalguri constituency as an independent candidate against Rihon Daimary who is now minister in Assam government, on the other Mrs. Pratibha Brahma, women entrepreneur cum activist, who contested from the United People Party ticket from Kokrajhar east (ST) constituency against Pramila Rani Brahma in the last 14<sup>th</sup> Assam Legislative Assembly election.

Moreover, in the context of BTC politics, the participation of women is very low in comparison to male counterpart. In the grassroots politics which can be counted from the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) and in case of BTC where there is Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) in place of Panchayat System (Karjie, 2017). VCDC is constituted normally with 14 nominated members where Chairman and other members are nominated by the Council government from amongst the party workers (Basumatary S. , 2017). But the participation of women is very negligible in VCDC.

The BTC Government from 2015 has started nominating women candidate as the Chairperson in some of the VCDCs in which women were got the opportunity to take part in the decision making process. In the four districts of BTAD namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri, the political power is mainly dominated by the male counterpart. The BTC has 46 legislative members and as per provision made in para 2 (1) of the six schedule provision for increasing the members of the BTC is upto 46 out of which 30 is reserved is for Scheduled Tribes (ST), 5 for non-tribal communities, 5 open for all communities and 6 to be nominated by the Governor of Assam from the unrepresented communities from the BTC area where 2 members at least should be from the women categories. The nominated members have equal rights and privileges as elected members including voting rights in the council. The election of 40 members has been elected from 40 constituencies by exercising adult franchise and they have been elected for the period of 5 years (Siddique, 2015). The following table has shows the participation of women in election.

Table 4.5: Women Participation in BTC Legislative Assembly since 2005

Years	Total No. of Seats	No. of Elected Members		(% of Female Elected Members)
		Male	Female	
2005	46	44	02	04.54
2010	46	43	03	06.97
2015	46	41	05	12.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>23.70</b>

- Among the female Elected Members also includes Governors Nominee.

Source: *BTCLA Elections, bodoland.gov.in* accessed on 16.07.2018

The above table clearly shows that the participation of women in all BTC Legislative Assembly constituencies of four districts is very negligible and less than male counterpart. In the 2005 Council election out of 46 seats, there were only 2 female members and no female candidates were able to win in the first BTC election, except two nominated members. The male participation in BTC politics has seen a dominating factor in all districts of BTCLA constituencies in comparison to female. In 2010, Labita Das was the only women candidate who has been elected from the Udalguri district and two were nominated by the Governor. In the third BTCLA election of 2015, the women participation in politics continues to be negligible as there was only one member has been elected and there was no significant improvement of women members in the council. In the last BTC election Smt. Malati Rani Narzary contested from Salakati (ST) constituency under Kokrajhar district from the independent banner and Mrs. Moonmun Brahma contested from No. 1 Parpathjara ST constituency but they could not win the election. There are other female candidates who were also contested in the last BTCLA election and they could not defeat the male counterpart. Women from Kokrajhar district especially few brave and inspiring Bodo women contested the election in the last BTC election under the independent banner but they could not win against their male counterpart (Brahma A. , 2018). Therefore, there is no significant improvement of Bodo women participation even in BTC Politics.

## 4.12 CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be mentioned that the role and participation of Bodo women in politics was started only after their involvement in the Roman Script movement in 1974-75. The role of Bodo women in politics and their participation in electoral politics were lacking behind in comparison to the other Indian women's political participation in general since independence. Bodo women though they have exercised voting rights but their presence in all political leadership are very negligible. The religious reformation of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma through 'Brahma Religion' and the movement for separate homeland led by ABSU has only changed the socio-political scenery of the Bodos in general and particularly the women. The Bodo women have realized need for political participation and empowered the women for the protection and preservation of their rights and privileges. As a result, the participation of Bodo women especially from the Kokrajhar District in the subsequent elections held after the creation of BTC in 2003 has improved the conditions of the women. From the parliamentary election of 2004 and BTC election of 2005, the participation of Bodo women of Kokrajhar district in politics has changed the women's attitudes towards politics. Thus, it can be concluded that the political consciousness among the Bodo women and especially to the women of Kokrajhar district have started only after Bodoland Movement and they have been participating gradually in the various political activities in the present time.

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