

## CHAPTER - IV

### THE MAJOR BODO MOVEMENTS

By the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bodos of the Brahmaputra valley had become notably conscious with regards to their overall socio-economic and political conditions. Modern education and its imbibed knowledge had clearly made them understand how to face the challenges of new adversities. They had come to realize that they were needed to fight a rational, legal and constitutional battle in order to survive individually and as a distinct community. They had come to know that they were socially, economically, educationally and politically very backward and realized that due to the very fact they failed to occupy any prominent place in the British administration and the same condition prevailed even after the independence where all important positions were occupied by the Bengalese or Assamese caste-Hindu elite making them seriously think that they were neglected and deprived of their legitimate share of administrative jobs and other privileges.

So, the Bodos therefore began to feel for organizing themselves to eliminate the backwardness of their community and to fight for achieving all-round privileges. Thus, as the Bodos became more and more identity conscious, the educated elite felt the need of an organization to address their problems and grievances that ultimately culminated into forming of various organizations and the initiative began with the formation of a first Bodo organization and also the first students' organization known as the *Assam Bodo Chatra Sanmilan* that was founded in 1919 at Dhubri.<sup>1</sup> From then on many Bodo organizations came up with the clear purpose to uplift the community, to fight for legitimate rights and equality, demand for justice and redressal of grievances etc., and some of these organizations were responsible for the emergence of several socio-political movements among the Bodos in the post independence period.

### **Pre-Independence Situations:**

However, in order to understand better about the whole parameters, elements and components of post independence Bodo movements, there is a need for understanding the pre-independence development of Bodo activities especially in the spheres of socio-economic and politics which played major role in identity assertion and political autonomy movements in the post independence period. As mentioned earlier, the Bodos started organizing themselves was a clear sign of their endeavour to elevate the overall dismal conditions and low status of the community. Identity assertion and identity formation was a result of identity consciousness and the Bodos became conscious due to the fact that their identity was on the verge of extinction. The first man to understand the gravity of such situation of the Bodos was Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma about whom a little discussion has already been made in the previous chapter. The Bodos as a community today is truly fortunate enough to have a great soul like Srimat Kalicharan Brahma not as a religious preacher but as a savior and protector of the Bodos as a distinct community who had made the first clarion call to save the Bodos from the internal and external destruction.

Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma devoted his life for restructuring of Bodo society through Brahma Dharma Movement. Brahma Dharma Movement was more than a religious movement. His movement encompassed economic, political, educational and socio-cultural interest of the Bodo people. He urged for the formation of Tribal League, retention of Goalpara district within Assam and Retention of Assam with Indian union. His initiative and vision for the development of education, social and economic reformation etc. project him not only as religious guru but as a great visionary, master, friend, philosopher and leader of the Bodo society.<sup>2</sup> As a fact, a prime factor in the development of education and cultural consciousness among a section of the Bodo people was the spread of Brahma religion in the mid-nineteenth century propagated by Gurudev Kalicharan himself which became more than a religious movement because the converted Bodos tried to spread education and activate social reforms. As a result, the Brahmas among the Bodos became educationally and culturally more advanced than their unconverted brethren and took over the leadership of the socio-political life of the Bodos. For example, the first political elites-such as Rupnath Brahma who became a Minister in the Assam Government-were, educated Brahmas.<sup>3</sup> It was in 1936 that Sitanath Brahmachoudhury became the first Bodo graduate and later became the first Bodo M.P.

in 1952 on the congress ticket. His father had served as a Hakim (Magistrate) as he could spell his name. The trend of higher education has since grown among the Bodos, mainly through the converted Brahmas.<sup>4</sup> Following his footsteps many educated elites of the Bodos came out to render their voluntary services for the cause of their community through the formation of various organizations as such the first major step in this direction was of course the formation of the Bodo Chhatra Sanmilani (the Bodo Students Association) in 1919 at Dhubri, the then headquarter of the undivided Goalpara District.<sup>5</sup> As being the first organization of the Bodos, it played a pioneering role in the socio-cultural and educational development of the community.

In fact, there is no denying the fact that the Bodo student community played a conspicuous role since its formation, which rebuilt the long neglected mighty Bodo nationality. The activities of this organization brought in, for the first time, a sense of solidarity among the Bodo students all over Assam and taught them how to fight for the redress of some of their genuine grievances. As a result a few more Bodo youth organizations like the *Kachari Youth Association* and *Goalpara District Bodo Association* were soon formed to voice grievances on matters not strictly falling under students' activities.<sup>6</sup> In course of time these two organizations also took up some political activities concerning the future of the Bodos.

The Chatra Sanmilan adopted a number of voluntary measures along with the *Bodo Maha Sanmelen* which was first organized in 1921 at Bhaoraguri, near present Gossaigaon sub-division to bring about a number of reforms in the age-old misbeliefs prevailing in the society and to generate mass awakening for improvement of the miserable plight of the Bodos.<sup>7</sup> The Bodo Maha Sanmelen, within no time, turned out to be the main platform for activities of the Bodo intellectuals. This organization held conferences from time to time in which important decisions were made and resolutions passed. These conferences emphasized mainly the need for eradication of social evils. The emergence of Bodo Maha Sanmelen considered to be a landmark event in the history of renaissance and reconstruction of socio-cultural identity of the Bodos. This is often identified as the beginning of the movement for self-determination, because the objective and characteristic feature of this event was less religion and more concerned with social reform, concerned with identity and status of the community and socio-economic and educational development of the Bodo community.<sup>8</sup> Kalicharan Brahma, who took leading part in organizing and decision making in all the meetings of the *Bodo Maha Sanmelen*

very clearly understood that mere adoption of *Vedic* ideals would not improve their community status in the context of wider Assamese society. They were quite unaware of their backward socio-cultural and economic condition as well as about their community identity and glorious history of the past. He identified the factors responsible for their degraded status and socio-cultural backwardness in broader national and inter-societal context. Development in education and eradication of evil practices from the society was the only way to improve their lots. He understood that massive changes in the normative structure of existing society were needed which could be brought only through modern education and reform movement.<sup>9</sup> The Maha Sanmelaan resolved to work for the development of the Bodo Community and adopted some important resolutions. The Maha Sanmelaan viewed that some of the customs and traditions practiced by the Bodo community appeared quite unsuitable and odd to cope with the new trends of civilization. So resurgence in culture and religion, which became urgent need of the time, was brought in the community through reformations.<sup>10</sup>

The remarkable feature associated with Brahma Dharma and social reform movement led by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma was that the entire movement was assisted, guided and cooperated by the high caste Hindu intellectuals from the very beginning. High caste liberal Hindu intellectuals understood that the Orthodox Brahmanical Hinduism, as a system of religion and way of life no longer remained as the viable option for untouchables, depressed class and tribe due to its inherent features of social inequality and exploitation. Islam with the principal of equality and brotherhood and Christianity with principal, '*all men are equal before the sight of God*' stood as viable alternative before them.<sup>11</sup> To detract the mass people from conversion to Islam and Christianity, the structural and ideal norms of Hindu religion was reformed for which the converts neither to lose their community identity nor constitute low caste stratum in the Hindu social hierarchy after conversion nor the converts become subject to exploitation and suppression of high caste people.<sup>12</sup> Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma himself witnessed that large number of Bodos in Panbari area of Dhubri had been converted into Islam and similarly to New-Vaishnavism throughout in Assam losing their socio-cultural identity.<sup>13</sup> During that period, the situation of the Bodos might be compared with other parts of India. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma started preaching his religion among the Bodos when several such religious movements were going on elsewhere such as the *Brahma Samaj* movement in Bengal and adjacent states, *Prarthana Samaj* movement in Bombay, *Arya Samaj* movement in Uttar Pradesh and the *Seng Khasi* movement in the

Khasi Hills etc.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it seemed that the Bodos came out on the path of enlightenment and development only after the Brahma movement awakened them towards the movement for the reconstruction and establishment of community identity, development of language, literature etc., which in due course motivated them to fight for political self-determination.

By far the greatest contribution of the Brahma movement was in the field of education. In a sense, the movement led to the expansion of a literary movement among the Bodos by producing creative and reformatory writings in the Bodo language. Mention may be made of the works of a band of social workers like Promod Brahma, Ishan Mushahari, Satish Basumatary, Rupnath Brahma, Modaram Brahma, Ananda Chandra Brahma and Bisnucharan Basumatari.<sup>15</sup> This literary movement was eventually responsible for the formation of the All Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 for the cultural and linguistic development of the Bodo-Kachari people as a whole.

Influenced with the idea of an amalgamated Bodo race, the Bodo elite of the period tried to customize social rules with a motive to unite geographically as well as socio-religiously the scattered Bodos of Assam. The first Bodo book printed by the community on its own effort was *Bodoni Phisa O' Aiyen* in 1915 from south Goalpara.<sup>16</sup> The book was on the customs and traditional rules of the Bodo people. Again, in 1924 the Assam *Bodo Chatra Sanmilani* published the Bodo journal, *Bibar*. This quarterly journal edited by Satish Chandra Basumatary was published till 1926. Many Bodo poems, songs, prose and stories were written and produced by this journal, which saw the flowering of Bodo language and literature.<sup>17</sup> Some writers of this period tried to remind the Bodos about their glorious past as the master rulers of the vast Brahmaputra Valley. In 1932, *Bitharai*, a Bodo journal was published under the leadership of Pramod Chandra Brahma.<sup>18</sup> In 1938, a monthly Bodo magazine, *Alhambra*, was published and the contributors of these journals created a new dimension in the development of the Bodo language and literature. Many romantic poets emerged during that period. In the artistic hands of these romantic poets Bodo language and literature got a new life and spirit.<sup>19</sup> The Bodo elite did not confine themselves to socio-educational and literary activities alone. They also encouraged the Bodo people to pursue trade and business for economic betterment of the community. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma even established a school of handicraft that received government patronage. The purpose was to make the Bodos economically independent and not too much dependent on agriculture.<sup>20</sup> The Bodo elites

also felt it necessary to encourage trade of their agricultural products for the economic betterment of the Bodos. With this view in mind Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma organized a Brahma company. Many shops were opened with the aid of the company's shareholders in different places. The idea was progressive and the company flourished and gradually a trade relation developed with Bengal.<sup>21</sup> But the relation did not last long as the company failed due to lack of able organizers. Whatsoever was the case, it must be admitted that this was a bold attempt at shaping the Bodo economy in the non-traditional line.<sup>22</sup>

In 1929, Gurudev Kalicharan along with his associates submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in Shillong for the political rights of the tribal people which could be seen as a definite sign of political consciousness of the Bodos towards the end of the 1920s. The educated elites of the Bodos grew with a reformative passion in the initial stages and they were only actively engaged in the social reformation services. But very soon they developed a concrete and distinct political mind as they started showing interest and involvement in the political domain and democratic processes of the country. Their true aspiration was revealed when they stressed on separate electorates while submitting their memoranda to the Simon Commission. By 1930s the Bodo identity had already taken a definite shape. In the conference of *Assam Kachari Yuvak Sanmilani* held at Titabar, Jorhat on 12 August, 1927, the representatives drawn from all parts of Assam and all tribal communities of Bodo family adopted a resolution to recognize themselves as independent from the Hindu community in all aspects, political, social and religious.<sup>23</sup> That was indeed a clear indication of the growth of Bodo consciousness.

The Simon Commission which was constituted at St. James, London, on 26 November 1927, consisted of nine members and the Royal Notification throughout the Indian dominion on March 6, 1928, called for a memorandum to be submitted to the Simon Commission.<sup>24</sup> The aspiration of the leaders was reflected in their drafting of the memoranda to be submitted before the Simon Commission to identify them as a separate nation. As the Commission reached Assam in the late 1928, it immediately called for representative from Primitive and Backward tribes to be present in Shillong on January 4, 1929.<sup>25</sup> The Commission received about twenty seven memoranda from various groups and organizations of the Assam province in addition to the one submitted by the Assam Government. Out of these twenty-seven memoranda, four were submitted by Bodos and other plain tribals of Assam. In fact, the autonomy aspiration of at least the Bodos in particular and the plains tribals in general may easily be traced back to January 4, 1929,

the day four different memorandum were submitted by their representatives to the Indian Statutory Commission at Shillong.<sup>26</sup> These memorandums were submitted by the Bodo community of Goalpara district, *Assam Kachari Yuvak Sanmilani*, Bodos and Rabhas of Goalpara District and Dhubri *Boro Sanmilani*.<sup>27</sup> They appealed to the commission to preserve their distinct identity and independence as a community. Other demands included reservation of seats in the local legislature, representation in the government services according to its numerical strength and due share in administration, facilities for spread of education amongst them and scholarships and facilities for going abroad for higher studies in agriculture, engineering, commerce and science and creation of a Bodo regiment. A strong resentment against the proposal to transfer the then Goalpara District to Bengal was also expressed.<sup>28</sup>

The memorandum of the Plains Tribals which was submitted to the Commission also highlighted their glorious past. They also reacted sharply against mixed electorate. The system, as they put it, deprived them of sending their representative to the Legislative Council despite being a community with a very large number of populations. They clarified their argument by saying that due to the lack of representative to the council from their community they were lagging behind since no reform measure was implemented for their development. They had written that in spite of large number all advantages of the reform are being enjoyed either by a *Brahmin* or by a *Kshatriya*, or by a *Sudra*.<sup>29</sup> There was also a strong voice of demand raised by their memorandum asking for four seats for Assam in the Central Legislature out of which one for Mohammedan and the three others for non-Mohammedans and one of the three non-Mohammedan seats should be reserved for the Bodos of Assam.<sup>30</sup> Simultaneously the Bodos also opposed the merging of Goalpara with Bengal and rather opted to remain in Assam as they deemed that they were culturally more akin to Assam than to Bengal and thus expressed their solidarity with Assam as they wrote that we the Bodos can by no means call ourselves other than the Assamese.<sup>31</sup> It was apparent that though many other issues were raised in the memorandum by the plains tribal, their focal point was mainly to have a share in political power through representatives to the Council as well as in the local boards. Thus, the Bodo elite that grew with a reformative tendency in the beginning developed a distinct political mind by 1930 and within a short span of time would be organizing themselves cohesively to articulate their desire for political aspirations under the leadership of Bhimbar Deuri and others who would be bringing all the plain tribals

together and rightfully claim their place in the history of India through the formation of first tribal political organization called the Tribal League in 1933.<sup>32</sup>

As it became clear that by the submission of memorandum to the Statutory Commission the Bodos showed a definite sign of political consciousness and the next big step in their quest for political power came in 1933 when the All Assam Plains Tribal League was formed under the initiative of Rupnath Brahma and Bhimbar Deuri and a few other young educated Bodo leaders. That was perhaps the first attempt to form a purely political front of all the plain tribal communities of Assam under one umbrella organization.<sup>33</sup> The British government's idea to reorganize the administration of India on the basis of local-self government and provincial autonomy provided Bodo leaders some hope to prepare themselves to use the opportunity. Their preparation began with the formation of the Tribal League in 1933 with a view to participate in the forthcoming election.<sup>34</sup> The visit of Simon Commission concretized the desire for political participation among the plains tribes of Assam. Driven by the urge for self-assertion, the leaders organized a convention of all the plains Tribals at Raha on 17 April, 1933. The convention, presided over by Jadav Chandra Khakhlari, gave birth to the All Assam Tribal League, a common political organization of all the plains Tribes of Assam.<sup>35</sup> Its main thrust was to maintain the tribal identity, continuation of separate electorate, assurance of tribal representation in the Local Boards as determined by the League, inclusion of all tribes, irrespective of religion or faith, in the schedule of tribal people, treating of tribals as a separate class for Government services and preferential treatment in the matters of appointment, liberal financial grants to the tribals and allocation of maximum in the budget of every year for the spread of education among tribal communities, settlement of land to landless tribals, induction of one of them in the ministry.<sup>36</sup> Soon after the formation of Tribal League, there was also another organization formed under the presidentship of Rupnath Brahma known as All Assam Tribal Races Federation.<sup>37</sup> This was actually done with a view to earn collaboration from the various Hill tribes of Assam so that a common front of both plains tribes as well as hills tribes could be formed to fight for their common cause. But the objective was never achieved as the two had hardly anything common in their views and aims in their political struggle.<sup>38</sup>

One of the main reasons for tribal unity at that point of time was clearly observed by Andrew Clow, the then Governor of Assam in tenure between 1942 to 1946 who remarked that the Assamese, both caste Hindus and the Muslims, professed solicitude for



the tribes, but neither had troubled to study the question nor had any sympathy with the tribes. The feeling of deprivation among these communities thus fostered the growth of local organizations i.e., the Kachari Sanmilan, the Koch-Rajbangshi Sanmilan, Chutia Sanmilan, the Muttock Association, etc. throughout the province. Initially each organization worked independently and confined its activities and in the thirties they joined hands and formed the All Assam Tribal League.<sup>39</sup> The Tribal League was dominated by the Bodos from the very beginning. The organization also demanded a separate territory for the plains tribals of Assam on the basis of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1880. The Tribal League also supported the Line System in 1938 to protect the interest of the tribal people in general and Bodos in particular in order to stop the influx of land-hungry people, money lenders and traders to their territory.<sup>40</sup>

The Tribal League launched a movement for separate electorate status of the Bodos and other plains tribes. The League was successful in its movements and as a result of their movement separate electorate status was granted to them. In the first general election held under the Government of India Act, 1935 the Bodos did in fact cast their votes on the basis of separate electorate.<sup>41</sup> After the election the third Provincial Ministry in Assam was formed in September, 1938 by the Indian National Congress headed by Gopinath Bordoloi and on his persuasion Rupnath Brahma joined congress and joined the Ministry.<sup>42</sup> The plains Tribals lost its helmsman and therefore lost much of its importance also. The Tribal League was a very powerful organization of the plains tribals and remained the sole political organization even after India achieved independence. Various tribal communities of Assam like the Ahoms felt unhappy with the role of the national political parties. Not political reasons alone, socially too they felt exploited and suppressed because all the privileges of the province were being exclusively enjoyed by the high caste Hindu elites whether in government services, political spheres or in economic fields.<sup>43</sup> The effort by the tribes of Assam was remarkable in the context of political struggle made by every communities and the solidarity shown by them to unite for a common cause appeared to be striking for the dominant class at that point of time.

On the basis of recommendation of the statutory Commission, the Government of India Act of 1935, awarded separate electorate to the Plains Tribes. In the entire province of Assam four seats were reserved for the primitive and backward classes of Assam.<sup>44</sup> That opened the hitherto closed door to the corridor of political establishment and power

to the Bodos along with other plains tribal communities. The political space under colonial rule brought total involvement of all the Plains Tribes in the state politics and contributed towards their solidarity.<sup>45</sup> On the eve of India's independence, the tribal politics under the Tribal League had fallen more or less in a situation of tug-of-war fought between Saadullah of Muslim League and the Congress led by Gopinath Bordoloi to win over the confidence and support of the Tribal League to sustain their power. But the tribal leaders were also looking for opportunities to gain maximum advantages out of that war and always kept its options open and remained non-committal to either party. Ultimately Tribal League inclined towards Congress partly due to Saadullah's failure to win over the Tribal leaders and his deficiency in adopting balanced policies in sustaining his party's power as well as his biased attitude towards the people of Assam as a whole. Bordoloi's proposal for a protective system of tribal belts to safeguard the interests of the tribals from the immigrants finally earned him the co-operation of the Tribal League to his successful bid at toppling the Saadullah ministry in 1938.<sup>46</sup>

The Tribal League remained hostile to Saadullah for his immigration policy which was termed as a policy of invitation to landless people from beyond the borders to stream into Assam.<sup>47</sup> His administrative credibility eroded fast because of his unreserved support to the British war efforts and because of his repressive measures adopted towards the freedom fighters during 1942-43. His land settlement policy and the handling of the Line system caused anxiety among the local population. The Assamese, both tribals and non-tribals, vociferously denounced Saadullah when he supported Assam's inclusion in the grouping in accordance to the Cabinet Mission's proposals.<sup>48</sup> The land settlement policy for protecting the interests of the immigrants at the expense of that of the tribals, the issue of grouping and the demand for Pakistan created irreparable gulf between the Tribal League and the Saadullah Government which created favourable atmosphere for Bordoloi who took the advantage of the situation and proposed joint electorate with reservation of seats for the tribals and initiated discussion with the Tribal League paving the way for understanding of Tribal League with the Congress that led to the joining of Bhimbar Deuri and Rupnath Brahma of Tribal League to the Congress Parliamentary party in July, 1946 and Deuri was later inducted into the Bardoloi cabinet from 1946 to till 14 August, 1947.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, it is to be noted that thereafter, the Tribal League lost much of its importance and popularity among the tribals probably due to the fact that the Bodo leaders who joined the congress failed to fulfill the demands of the tribal population as they could not bring anything remarkable achievement to prove their

credibility and worthiness as being leaders of the downtrodden tribal populace. In 1954, the Tribal League was eventually converted into a Bodo socio-promotional organization styled as *All Assam Tribal Sangha* and remains as such even today.<sup>50</sup> The tribals honestly expected that the independence would solve most of their pending problems but ultimately all of their dreams proved to be totally futile as unabated encroachment of immigrants into the tribal lands continued, poor economic conditions remained the same, socially the tribals were still being neglected, land alienation continued, unemployment became all the more acute, the level of education remained far from being developed and they were time and again politically belied upon which in the immediate future created a favourable atmosphere for the emergence of the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) that would raise, for the first time, the demand of an autonomous state for the plains tribals of Assam.

#### **The Post Independence Situations:**

The Plains Tribal's Council of Assam (PTCA) in a memorandum submitted to the President of India in May 20, 1967 clearly stated that the Scheduled Tribes living in the plains of Assam were the most optimistic people about the working of Indian Constitution and their all round progress in Swaraj Bharat.<sup>51</sup> They were hopeful that they would be emancipated from backward condition and the independent India would really give adequate protection to their land, bring an end to all kinds of exploitations, provide modern techniques in agriculture and industries, open up new facilities for economic development, and create favourable conditions to conserve their language, culture, customs, traditions and help them grow according to their own genius which was the most cherished aspiration of the tribals.<sup>52</sup> The memorandum also continued that the simple and unsophisticated tribals were the happiest on the policy which the national Government loudly proclaimed to pursue. Following the attainment of independence, a profound wave of new hope for bright future pervaded through the length and breadth of India. The wave touched the hearts of the scheduled tribes of the Assam plains also and tribals thought that the National Government of the free and secular India would do justice to them and they could shun the political side and safely devote more attentively to socio-cultural and economic side of rehabilitation of their society and this was the sole reason why the plains tribals leaders changed their political organization the Tribal League into a socio-cultural organization named as *Tribal Sangha* which became the only representative organization of all the plains tribals of Assam that willingly came forward with an open

heart to co-operate with the State Government of Assam. The tribal leaders participated in the Tribes Advisory Council in order to make their grievances and difficulties known to the Government and pleaded the State Government to redress them. But all their hopes and expectations had been belied which had made them think that underneath the loudly proclaimed policy something else was there in the minds of the rulers of the land and law.<sup>53</sup> Despite their wholehearted co-operation with the Assamese ruling elite, the plains tribals, mainly the Bodos, were disappointed as their hopes and aspirations remained unresolved. The interests of the Assamese middle class received a moral boosting with the wholehearted help and co-operation taken from the plains tribals but they did not paid back the tribal people with less or equal dividend of their due share.<sup>54</sup>

It appeared that the expectations to fulfill the aspirations of the tribals by the successive governments in the early decades of the post independence period proved to be a total failure. The perpetuation of the inherited colonial state system without the benefit of industrialization could not change the structure of inequality, deprivation and underdevelopment. The problem became more acute in contemporary period. Tribals were forced to be dependent economically and subservient politically to the Hindu Upper caste landlords and ruling class in the post colonial period.<sup>55</sup> As a development policy the post independent Government for the first time constituted the Five-Year Plans whereby the Government tried to introduce change and planned development on various fields. The First Five Year Plan of 1951-56 was especially stressed on nation building through the expansion of administration, reorganization of political units from State down to the *panchayat* level; the economic development through the building of new institutions and political organizations.<sup>56</sup>

The problems of unemployment, land alienation, injustice and inequalities of the tribals remained the same in the post independence period and could not be solved easily by the planning and development policies of the Government.<sup>57</sup> There were huge amount of exploitation by the greedy non-tribal landlords and money-lenders which led to the acute problems of indebtedness and starvation of the tribal people.<sup>58</sup> As there were no adequate measures taken to expand the process of industrialization in the tribal areas, their economic position remained stagnant and could not develop beyond the level of peasant economy. Disparity in the implementation of educational and occupational opportunities as well as differential access to power and resources created a growing inequality and underdevelopment of the tribal society which had produced a profound

discontentment between the tribals of the plains and the non-tribals feudal ruling class.<sup>59</sup> It may be noted that under the provision of the Assam Land and Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1947, the Government of Assam led by Gopinath Bardoloi was forced to constitute thirty-three Tribal Belts and Blocks after independence in order to provide safeguard and protection to the tribal lands from alienation and encroachment by the non-tribals which ultimately proved to be totally inadequate and failed to deliver the desired result to the tribal leaders.<sup>60</sup>

The situation became all the more serious for the Bodos in the immediate aftermath of the partition when hordes of refugees migrated into the Bodo dominated areas of Kokrajhar and Goalpara from Bangladesh and Bengal, which caused the demography of the areas to change. Based on the census of India, Amiya Kumar Das counted an increase of population at the rate of 38.39, 44.12 and 91.15 per cent during the period 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-81 respectively.<sup>61</sup> It apparently indicated rapid influx of outsiders began as a trickle and then turned into a flood that engulfed the region. The percentage of Bengalis and Muslims rose dramatically, with Muslims forming 42.3 per cent of population of Goalpara as per the 1971 census, a percentage that was subsequently increased.<sup>62</sup> The situation further deteriorated when tribals found that instead of being protected, they had been reduced to a minority in their own areas because of the large-scale infiltration of outsiders. This affected their political cloud and worsens their constituencies, which were no longer influenced only by their voters. The migrant voters share was starting to take away any semblance of political power that they may have perceived as theirs.<sup>63</sup>

The Bodo leaders were not able to achieve anything worth-mentioning by joining hands with the ruling Congress and Muslim League from time to time and the agreement of 1946 between the Tribal league and the APCC was totally forgotten by the Congress when it came to power.<sup>64</sup> The one-sided violation of faith by the Congress as well as the profound apathy shown by the high class Assamese Brahmin politicians and ruling cliques to the problems and burning issues of the plains tribals finally dragged them to the path of political self-determination movements that was for the first time voiced and articulated by the PTCA. Prior to the emergence of the autonomy movement by the Bodos, the identity assertion movements under the leadership of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha gained momentum and dominated the proceeding of the Bodo activities in between 1960 to 1975. The Language and Script movements took the center-stage during this period

which played major role in the Bodo identity formation finally leading to the demand for political autonomy.<sup>65</sup>

The pre-independence Bodo leaders and elites thought of improving the conditions of their people by demanding through Parliament and State Legislative Assembly, facilities for education, medicine and irrigation and did not give much importance to the emotional need for establishing a separate identity, although they felt it. The younger generation had taken a new turn with the founding of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha.<sup>66</sup> The tribal leaders mainly remained engaged in the regeneration and rehabilitation of their language and literature after the conversion of the Tribal League into the *Tribal Sangha*. Language is a living confirmation as a psychological factor that binds people together. It also serves as a medium which conserves and maintains the cultural ethos of a people besides being a mark of their identity. The issue of language had been an emotive one for the Bodos in a manner similar to the part it had played in the other affected areas.<sup>67</sup>

After the independence, two other developments coincided with the growing awareness of the Bodo leaders were the constitutional provisions for the protection and development of tribal cultures; and the first general elections in free India. During that period the Bodos were trying to find a way to raise their status and to meet the aspirations of their people. They were on the crossroads in their campaign to improve the conditions and status of the Bodos. They wanted to revive their language to unite and develop the Bodos. The Bodos as the largest homogeneous peasant community of Assam –suffering from the evils of landlordism and money-lenders and having experienced agrarian revolts under communist leadership – later mobilized for their agitation on the issue of language, because the leadership had found it to be more profitable to direct the feeling of economic exploitation into cultural channels.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the political movement of the Bodos more or less emerged out of the movement for linguistic rights and language was the favourite political issue in Assam. In fact, most similar movements of the region had taken off over the issue of language, especially after the enactment of the Language Act of the Government of Assam in 1960.<sup>69</sup>

### **Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Language Movement:**

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha which was formed as a literary organization in 16<sup>th</sup> of November, 1952 at Basugaon was the first land-mark organization of the Bodos which had been playing a vanguard role in awakening and arousing a sense of self-respect and

national sentiments among the Bodos since its inception and even till to these days. The clash of interest began between mainstream Assamese nationalism and Bodo nationality when Bodo Sahitya Sabha was created in 1952. The trends of the construction and development of Assamese nationality moved up unaffected and flourished into high level so long as Bodo Sahitya Sabha was not in existence.<sup>70</sup> The Bodo Sahitya Sabha was founded with three important objectives - firstly, creation of common Bodo language and literature by uniting and synthesizing Boro, Dimacha, Kok-Borok (Tipperah) and other allied Bodo languages, secondly, upgradation of Bodo language as a medium of instruction and thirdly, development of Bodo culture and building of Bodo nationality through literary works.<sup>71</sup> The necessity of such an organization was felt by government officials, social workers, and political leaders of the Bodo community.<sup>72</sup> One of the founder member of the BSS Maniram Moshahary observed that a decision at the national level for the preservation and promotion of the languages encouraged the educated Bodo people and leaders to take a decision for the preservation and promotion of Bodo language and this gave birth to Bodo Sahitya Sabha. The identity question of the Bodo people was discussed in the meeting and the role of language and education were taken as main points for the preservation of ethnic identity.<sup>73</sup>

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha was founded by a handful of elite working in the government offices in Dhubri in 1950. They were members of the Bodo Literary Club at Dhubri. The students' organization called *Boroni Onsai Afat* of Dhubri was finally transformed to Bodo Sahitya Sabha which sought to develop the Bodo language.<sup>74</sup> It was a joint effort of the students of the Dhubri Government Higher Secondary School and the local businessmen. Birendra Patgiri was the first president and Rajendranath Brahma was the elected secretary of the club. Eminent personalities like Bandhuram Kachari, Modaram Brahma, Kamini Brahma, Sikendra Brahma, Barada Khanta Basumatary and others were the members of the club. The decision for enhancing the activities of the club was taken during a meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 1952. In a meeting held at Kokrajhar on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1952, a decision was taken for calling a two-day educational convention at Basugaon on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of November which ultimately led to the establishment of the Bodo Literary Society namely the Bodo Sahitya Sabha.<sup>75</sup> Some of the distinguished founding members of the Sabha were Satish Chandra Basumatary, Jogendra Kumar Basumatary, Promod Brahma Patgiri, Modaram Brahma and Joybhadra Hagjer. Joybhadra Hagjer was a Dimasa Kachari from North Cachar Hills and was elected as the first President of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Hagjer later on became

a Cabinet Minister in a Congress Ministry in Assam in the sixties.<sup>76</sup> Another Dimasa Kachari, Sonaram Thaosen was elected as the first General Secretary and Yogendra Nath Basumatary was elected as the joint Secretary of the Sabha. Syam Charan Tripura was executive member from Tripuri Kok-Brok.<sup>77</sup> In the convention representatives from undivided Assam even from Bengal participated. From Jalpaiguri district Bolichand Dev Karjee, Prabhu Dayal Muchahari, and Jitlal Muchahari along with many other participated. The then MALs, Rupnath Brahma, Dharanidhar Basumatary, and Davidson Bhobra attended the convention. The convention discussed about the introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction. Initially all the MALs including Rupnath Brahma opposed to this move but ultimately they were persuaded.<sup>78</sup>

The Sabha had been instrumental in arousing consciousness among the Bodos regarding their linguistic and ethnic identity. Since its formation, it had been holding annual sessions at various Bodo majority areas and had been organizing meetings and seminars to encourage Bodo writers and scholars. It also arranged publication of Bodo literary works. Under Sabha's guardianship, the Bodo language had developed considerably.<sup>79</sup> The Bodo identity formation received a boost under the guidance and crucial role played by the Sabha. The period of constitutional politics carried on by the Tribal League during the 1930s and 1940s was continued by the cultural activism of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha from the 1950s onwards. After the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the search for identity assumed a concrete shape. The Sabha took remarkable steps for the development of the Bodo language and preservation of the Bodo culture.<sup>80</sup> Though the main activities of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha were to develop and promote Bodo language and literature, later on it participated in agitation politics also just as Asom Sahitya Sabha did. The Sabha published an annual organ or mouth-piece named *The Bodo* and the first editor of the organ was Satish Chandra Basumatary.<sup>81</sup> This publication had contributions in all three languages that an educated Bodo was expected to know, namely Bodo, Assamese and English. It showed that at least initially the Bodo Sahitya Sabha eschewed all kinds of linguistic chauvinism.<sup>82</sup>

For certain administrative and educational conveniences, the Bengali was introduced as a State language in Assam by the British Government in 1837 and since then the Assamese had been fighting for the right of Assamese language against Bengali. Dewan Anandaram Dhekeal Phukan strongly protested imposition of Bengali in Assam, who was then supported by the American Christian missionaries, opened first three



Assamese medium schools in 1836.<sup>83</sup> The Assamese people launched a movement for the introduction of their language in courts and schools. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the British Government introduced Assamese language in the courts of law in 1872 and in education department in 1873.<sup>84</sup>

Demanding the introduction of Bodo medium in Primary school, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha submitted a memorandum to the then Minister of Education, Mr. Jaybhadra Hagjer in 1953.<sup>85</sup> A copy of memorandum was also submitted to Mr. Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Congress president of Assam State Committee. But the Chief Minister and Congress president did not give any response to this memorandum. The members of Assam State Congress committee were sharply reacted and apprehended that the Bodo people might subsequently put demand for a separate state.<sup>86</sup> In 1956, the Assam Government composed some books in the Bodo language but the books were rejected by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha as they contained a number of Assamese words.<sup>87</sup> In the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of Bodo Sahitya Sabha a constitution was formulated whereby primary units of Bodo Sahitya Sabha came into existence in different places. From 1952 to 1960, achievement of BSS was nothing spectacular, only confined to organizational development. The demand for Assamese as Official language of entire Assam in 1960 exerted negative reactions on the non-Assamese people, particularly amongst the Hills people.<sup>88</sup> The non-Assamese people of Assam considered it as the policy of Assamisation through the imposition of Assamese language on non-Assamese people. As a reaction to this move taken by Assamese speaking people, the hill people demanded for retention of English as the Official language in Hill areas and the people of Barak Valley demanded Bengali as the official language in Barak Valley.<sup>89</sup> Immediately after the commencement of the constitution in 1950, the Asom Sahitya Sabha wanted the Government of Assam to declare Assamese as the sole official language of the State which the Government hesitated to do so. But the Ahom Sahitya Sabha served a deadline for the Government till 1960 for fulfilling their said demand.<sup>90</sup> The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee was also pressing upon the Government on the same issue. But the proposal of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, backed by the State Pradesh Congress Committee, was deeply resented by the people of Surma Valley and other tribal communities in the State. Despite all objections from the opposition groups on 24 October 1960, Assamese was declared as the sole official language of the State.<sup>91</sup>

The Sabha opposed the implementation of Assamese as the Official State Language of the State and advocated Hindi as the Official Language not only in Assam but everywhere in India. The Sabha also expressed the sentiment that since the Bodos had their language and culture their children had to be given education in their mother-tongue<sup>92</sup> so that their distinct identity can be maintained. The Executive meeting of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, held at Kokrajhar in 1960 considered that the implementation of language policy would divide Assam on language basis and hence resolved to urge the government for implementation of Hindi language as the official language of Assam as an alternative option, acceptable to all. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha expressed its viewpoints on the issue of Assam's State Language Bill through a resolution extending its support in favour of Hindi as the State's sole official language and the reasons given were as follows:<sup>93</sup>

1. The unity of India had to be maintained in order to preserve the newly won independence. The issue of the official language issue in Assam had threatened the unity having given rise to fissiparous tendency which became harmful for Assam and for India as a whole. To put an end to such tendency the best course was, in the opinion of the Bodo people, to accept *Hindi* as the official language of the State of Assam placing thereby every linguistic group in the State on the same footing whereby also putting the people of the State of Assam one step forward towards learning *Hindi*.
2. Every linguistic group desired to keep alive their literature and get education in their own mother-tongue. The biggest linguistic group in the State, the Assamese was only 54 per cent. According to the opinion of the State Reorganization Commission, a language should be spoken by seventy per cent or more to be recognized as an Official Language of a State. Looking at from this point of view, the declaration of Assamese as official language of Assam would mean imposition on the people of other linguistic groups. The people of the Hill districts and of Cachar were almost one and all ignorant of the language. Even in the Brahmaputra Valley Districts; mainly the northern parts of Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang and some parts of Nowgong and North Lakhimpur Districts the uneducated rural tribal people, mostly the Bodo people, were totally ignorant of the language. The purpose for the adoption of the official language of a State was to better and smoothen the administration. The adoption of Assamese as an official language would totally fail.

3. In Assam, the Bodo speaking people were the largest tribal group and they had preserved their language and culture all years under adverse circumstances. They desired very legitimately to preserve them in future also. They considered that to maintain their separate identity and to develop themselves most speedily, their children would be given education in their mother tongue. That might not be not possible if Assamese was recognized as the official language of Assam for, in that case Assamese would be an extra language that the Bodo students would have to learn putting thereby an extra burden upon them and placing them at a disadvantageous position.

The viewpoints of the resolution amply showed that the Bodo Sahitya Sabha was seriously concerned about the survival of Bodo language and deeply realized the need for imparting education in the mother-tongue and therefore strongly decided to engage in a movement for the implementation of Bodo language as a medium of instruction in schools by the beginning of the 1960s.

In the backdrop of declaring Assamese as the sole official language of the State, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha finding no other alternative, decided to launch a movement for introduction of Bodo language in the primary schools in the Bodo populated areas. On the Bodo Literary Day of 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1962 more than twenty thousand supporters gathered in Kokrajhar town which was organized by Bodo Sahitya Sabha to stage a procession on demand of introduction of the Bodo language as the medium of instruction in primary level of education.<sup>94</sup> As a result of this mass demonstration, the Government of Assam in response constituted a one-man Enquiry Committee headed by Rupnath Brahma, the Bodo minister in the Assam Government. The Government recognized the use of Bodo language in the Bodo concentrated areas in 1963 for primary schools. The then Chief Minister of Assam Bimala Prasad Chaliha formally and officially inaugurated the introduction ceremony of Bodo language as the medium of instruction in primary school upto class III at the Kokrajhar Government High School on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1963.<sup>95</sup> The huge public meeting was presided over by the president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, Mr. Prafulla Goswami and attended by the Education Minister, Deva Kanta Barua and Deputy Education Minister Mrs. Kamal Kumari Barua and number of Ministers.<sup>96</sup> After completion of class III, the Bodo medium students had to continue their education through Assamese medium from class IV onwards which became practically impossible for the Bodo students who completed the primary education upto

class III in Bodo medium. The first batch students of Bodo medium completed their primary school in 1967 and became eligible for admission into ME school. As per Government order, the introduction of Bodo medium was only for primary level. The government was not aware of the fact and no initiative was taken by the Government for giving introductory knowledge on Assamese to those students of Bodo medium in primary level. Students and guardians faced a serious trouble.<sup>97</sup> The Bodo Sahitya Sabha, therefore, on 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1968 demanded the introduction of Bodo language upto class VI. Two representatives of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, J. K. Basumatary and S. C. Das met the then Chief Minister at the Guwahati circuit house. But the Assam Government refused their demand as the Bodo language was not an established regional language. In the juncture, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha served an ultimatum to the Government of Assam in its annual conference held on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1968 at Ramfalbil giving two weeks time to meet their demands or else they threatened to organize much bigger movements.<sup>98</sup>

Bodo Sahitya Sabha extended the ultimatum to 27<sup>th</sup> February 1968 and informed the Government by telegraphic message that failing to resolve amicable solution on the issue of Bodo medium the Bodo Sahitya Sabha would launch a mass movement with effect from 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, 1968. On 28<sup>th</sup> February, 1968, the language movement started from Kokrajhar with the boycotting of schools and colleges. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1968, schools and colleges within Kokrajhar Sub-division observed *bandh* and 4<sup>th</sup> March onward total Kokrajhar Sub-Division was declared *bandh*. Education Minister Jaybhadra Hagjer and other Ministers and MLAs requested to suspend the movement but the movement continued. On 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1968 a team of Ministers and MLAs led by State Minister of Education, Sayed Ahmed Ali came to Kokrajhar. The team included, Minister Ranendra Narayan Basumatary and other MLAs, Bahadur Basumatary, Uttam Brahma, Rani Manjula Devi, Sarat Rabha and Kabir Ray Pradhani. Bhisnu Rabha, MLA came as a special representative of the Chief Minister.<sup>99</sup> The government team arrived Kokrajhar amidst total Kokrajhar *bandh* observed by the supporters of the language movement. Bodo Sahitya Sabha informed the government team that Matriculation (HSLC) final examination scheduled to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> March onwards would be obstructed on failure of fulfillment of demand for introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction in ME standard. As per report of the Deputy Commissioner, on 11<sup>th</sup> March night, about fifteen thousand people gathered at Kokrajhar town with a view to obstruct Matriculation examination on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1968.<sup>100</sup> In the meantime the Assembly Session held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1968 recognized the Bodo language as the medium of instruction in ME standard by passing a

law and this decision was conveyed to Bodo Sahitya Sabha through the Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara through telegraphic message right at 10 PM, 11<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>101</sup>

On 31<sup>st</sup> March and on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1968, the representatives of Bodo Sahitya Sabha along with the members of Legislative Assembly met the Chief Minister and a document was signed pertaining to the introduction of the Bodo language as a medium of instruction at the secondary level of education. On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1968, the Government of Assam formally communicated to the president of the BSS its decision to introduce Bodo as a medium of instruction at the secondary stage of education and at the same time requested the Sabha to appoint an expert committee for the purpose.<sup>102</sup> The State Education Minister formally inaugurated the introduction of Bodo medium at secondary level at Kokrajhar Higher Secondary School on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1968. But, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha alleged that the introduction of Bodo language had not yet been fully implemented in practical terms.<sup>103</sup> The first batch of the Bodo medium students in ME standard completed their education and came for admission into class VII in Secondary level in 1971. The Government of Assam was quite indifferent on implementation of Bodo medium in Secondary level. Due to the constant pressure by Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Sarat Chandra Sinha, the then Chief Minister arranged a joint meeting of Govt. of Assam and the representatives of Bodo Sahitya Sabha on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1971.<sup>104</sup> As per the agreement of this joint meeting the Government ultimately decided to implement Bodo medium in Secondary stage (High School Stage) as part of the government's standing policy decision of 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1968. On 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1972 Bodo medium was implemented in Secondary stage.<sup>105</sup>

### **The Script Movement of the Bodos:**

The use of suitable script for Bodo language had also appeared as a major organizational issue before the Bodo Sahitya Sabha since the introduction of the Bodo language as the medium of instruction in Primary school. The script issue had appeared as a matter of hot discussion in every session of Bodo Sahitya Sabha.<sup>106</sup> Because of the introduction of Bodo language as a medium of instruction in the primary level from 1963, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha had recommended the Assamese script for the Bodo language. The Sabha had yet to discover and decide the original script of the Bodo language though it had been demanding Bodo language as the medium of instruction in schools. Ultimately, when it had become impossible to discover the suitable script of the Bodo language the Sabha had decided to accept the Roman Script for their language. A

group of Bodo students studying at Shillong had made the suggestion to accept the Roman script for the Bodo language.<sup>107</sup>

In the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual session of the BSS held in 1965 the Bodo Script Sub-Committee, Bodo Text Book Sub-Committee and Roman Script Implementation Sub-Committee were formed to settle the issues of the Bodo Script.<sup>108</sup> These committees decided to collect feedbacks from the Bodo people in 1969. Many educationists and intellectuals were invited to extend their opinion on the script issue. A large number of Bodos gathered in a meeting conducted in Belguri village near Rupahi Railway Station. In favour of the Roman script a resolution was adopted in the meeting.<sup>109</sup> The Expert Committee formed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual session of Bodo Sahitya Sabha to settle the script issue failed to suggest any amicable solution. Therefore, another expert committee was formed in 1969 at Rangapara Session of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha which recommended the Roman Script as the suitable script for the Bodo language. Through a brain storming debate and discussion the recommendation of the Expert committee was approved by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha.<sup>110</sup> In the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the Sabha held in February 1970 at Mahakalguri in West Bengal, a sub-committee for the implementation of the Roman Script was also appointed which gave its report suggesting the introduction of Bodo Text Books in Roman Script from Class 'A' ('ka-man', i.e., with the prevailing Assamese equivalent) from the academic year 1971 onwards. On 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1971 the Bodo Sahitya Sabha deputed a team of representation to discuss with the then Chief Minister of Assam, Sri Mohendra Mahon Choudhury and conveyed their decision of accepting the Roman script. In his turn, the Chief Minister took a strong stand against the Roman script and so the discussion miserably failed to achieve the desired result.<sup>111</sup> The Bodo Sahitya Sabha organized a meeting in Kokrajhar and resolved to continue the agitation for the Roman Script. As a consequence, two memorandums were submitted to the successive Assam Chief Ministers Mohendra Mohan Chaudhury in 1971 and Sarat Chandra Sinha in 1972. Both the Chief Ministers denied the approval of Roman script for the Bodo language.<sup>112</sup> The declaration of Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the two universities of Assam came into force in June, 1972. Immediately after this declaration the Assam Linguistic Minorities Rights Commission (ALMRC) was set up in August, 1972. Charan Narzary, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) General Secretary, became its Vice President. The ALMRC, with full support from the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, fought in favour of retention of English as the medium of instruction in the universities of Assam. The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) also submitted a

memorandum to the Prime Minister on the medium of instruction in Assam (universities) and autonomy for the plains tribals.<sup>113</sup> During the Chief Ministership of Sarat Chandra Sinha and Home Ministership of Hiteswar Saikia in Assam the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 12 September, 1974 launched a movement demanding the approval of the Roman script but it was rejected with savage brutality by the State Government.<sup>114</sup>

Backed by the entire Bodo society including the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and the All Bodo Students' Union, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha reaffirmed their decision in favour of the Roman script for the Bodo language in September, 1974 and gathered impressive arguments for their demand which may be summarized as follows:

1. The Kothari Education Commission permitted adoption of Roman Script.
2. The neighbouring Garo people of Goalpara used the Roman Script.
3. Famous linguists such as Dr. S.K. Chatterji and B. Kakati, recommended the Roman Script as being the most appropriate for the Bodo language.
4. The script was widely adopted in the world.
5. It would not be a new script for the Bodo language and was first used for the Bodo literature in 1886. The Assam Government prepared Bodo text books in Roman Script in 1904 to introduce primary education among Bodos which they used upto 1936.<sup>115</sup>

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha unable to achieve any government approval on the Roman script issue introduced the Bodo Primer, entitled *Bithorai* in Roman script at class-I in its own effort. Thus, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha took the decision of voluntary implementation of the Roman script for the Bodo language from the beginning of 1974 and ultimately declared Roman script on 22 April 1974 as the common script of the Bodo language throughout Assam and outside and made an appeal to the teachers of the Bodo medium primary schools to introduce the Bodo primer *Bithorai* in class-1.<sup>116</sup> On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1974 the Roman script was declared as the Bodo script at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the BSS held in Khelmari, near Tezpur. The result of this action of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha was the anger of the Government which immediately issued an order withholding the payment of salaries to the teachers as well as grants to those schools involved in introducing the Roman script. This resulted in protests, a token strike on 12 September 1974 and mass picketing of schools on 18-21 September.<sup>117</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1974, the tribal MLAs and the Minister for Tribal Affairs held a discussion

with the Chief Minister. They prepared a memorandum and submitted it to the Chief Minister along with the All Assam Tribal Sangha and tribal MLAs. The memorandum was rejected by the State Government. Consequently, the Sabha resumed its agitation programme with full support from the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and the Bodo Students' Union.<sup>118</sup>

The alleged apathy of the Assam Government towards implementation of the Roman script resulted in some violence. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha then launched a mass movement against the Government which was peaceful in the initial two stages but turned violent subsequently. The ABSU volunteers played a major role in organising the Bodo people against the Government.<sup>119</sup> Instead of conceding the demand of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha the Assam Government took repressive measures to suppress the movement. The ABSU in their memorandum submitted to the Three Members Expert Committee stated that the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the All Bodo Students' Union jointly launched a vigorous movement for getting Roman script for Bodo language during 1974-75 and the Assam Government tried to crush down that peaceful mass movement in which 15 Bodo people lost their valuable lives in police gun shootout as well as many Bodo villages were raided. Many Bodo houses were burnt, properties either damaged or looted; not less than 50 thousand Bodo people were arrested and put into jails and ultimately *Devanagiri* script was accepted by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha at the intervention of the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, in lieu of Roman script.<sup>120</sup>

Supported by the ABSU, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha launched an indefinite picketing beginning from 27 April 1974. As a result of the appeal made by the Sabha, the Bodo volunteers came out in thousands for holding demonstrations in the administrative offices of the Government, such as in the Block Development Offices, the Sub-divisional Offices and the Deputy Commissioner's Offices of Goalpara, Bijni, Sidly, Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Gossaigaon, Tangla, Rowta, etc. The movement ultimately turned violent in some places forcing the government to resort to firing resulting in the killing of as many as 15 Bodos.<sup>121</sup> When the script movement created a panic situation, the State Government communicated to the Centre, requesting to solve the issue. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha on the request of Assam Government called off the movement on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1974 and agreed for a discussion.<sup>122</sup> The State government referred the matter to the Central government after failing to arrive at a solution through discussion with the leaders of the movement. Keeping in view the broader national perspective, the Prime



Minister, Indira Gandhi, offered Devanagari Script for the Bodo language, which was subsequently reviewed thoroughly by the Executive Committee of the BSS and ABSU in a joint meeting held at Barama on 12 April 1975.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Devanagari Script was finally accepted by the Bodos. The recognition of the Devanagari script for the Bodo language by the 16th Annual session of Bodo Sahitya Sabha held at Dhing in April 1975 finally placed at rest the movement for Roman script for the Bodo language.

Due to the constant and relentless efforts of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the Bodo language came to be recognized as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) and this recognition was given by Gauhati University (1978), North Eastern Hills University (1978) and Dibrugarh University (1995). In 1996, the Gauhati University started M.A. course in Bodo language. Apart from that, Bodo was considered the co-associate official language in the Bodo inhabited areas of Assam.<sup>124</sup> In fact, the script movement was followed by the movement for the recognition of Bodo language as an associate official language of Assam. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha stood firm on its demand and submitted several memoranda to the State Government for the recognition of Bodo language. After four years of struggle, finally, the State Government granted the Bodo language the status of associate official language of Assam in 1985.<sup>125</sup> At present, the Bodo language is being recognized as one of the languages in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution which was promulgated by an act of parliament on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2003.

### **Plains Tribal Council of Assam and the *Udayachal* Movement:**

The emergence of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) was an important episode in the struggle for political self-autonomy of the Bodos in the Brahmaputra Valley. PTAC was the first political organization of the Bodos to demand or to initiate movement for an autonomous region known as Udayachal. The PTCA was formed towards the later part of the language movement with the aim to demand full autonomy which they thought would provide the plains tribals the necessary facilities to protect their language and culture while aiding their economic development according to their own choice. They desired to achieve autonomous state within the federal structure proposed by the Government of India in 1967.<sup>126</sup>

As the socio-economic conditions of the Plains Tribes remained unchanged in the post-Independence period too, therefore the extreme deprivations and oppressions had thrown the plains tribals from the peaceful protest and agitation to the vortex of political struggle.<sup>127</sup> The fact could be considered as the genuine background of political

consciousness of the plains tribals as their very existence was challenged by the ruling class. A new phrase known as tribal ethnicity emerged as a product of the inner contradiction in the social structure itself. The deprived sections of tribals became a class against the privileged class. This privileged class consists of upper caste landowning bourgeois. For their class interest they opposed the genuine equal opportunities for the socio-economically subjugated tribals of Assam. They were rather subjected to discrimination, ruthless exploitation and social oppression.<sup>128</sup> The partition of India as well as the ultimate creation of Bangladesh opened up the flood-gate of migrants that eventually proved harmful especially the land interests of the plain tribes. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1947 that was enacted to protect tribal land alienation and encroachment by the outsiders proved to be inadequate. Not only Tribal Sangha, but also other local ethnic organizations tried to draw the attention of the State government from time to time to this sort of breach of law in matters of land settlement creating concern to the survival of the tribal people. Under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar, the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission of India 1960-61 observed that the formation of the Tribal Belts and Blocks did not provide sufficient security to the tribal lands from the pressure of non-tribals.<sup>129</sup> In that regard the Commission had strongly recommended to adopt effective steps against the illegal transfer and alienation of tribal lands to the non-tribals and clearly stated that the Deputy Commissioner or Collector should have complete authority at the request of the aggrieved tribal land holder within a period of 12 years to institute enquiries and restore possession of the land with or without payment of any compensation to the transferee. The provision should be made applicable to all transfers of land by tribals to non-tribals with retrospective effect from 26th January, 1950, adequate machinery should be created to implement this law or regulation.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, the constitutional safeguards which the hills tribes enjoyed under the provisions of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> schedules of the constitution of India, the plains tribals were deprived of such protection of the constitution of India in the plains. While the hill tribes were acknowledged to be entirely different people in the plains, the Plains Tribes were seen historically as part of the Assamese society.<sup>131</sup> The recommendations of the Dhebar Commission was totally ignored by the State Government and as a consequence the land alienation from the tribal to the non-tribal continued. Moreover, the deprivation of the tribals to the jobs in the government departments and other establishments of the State also came to be resented by the conscious elements within the tribal communities. There

were also the widespread mishandling and maltreatment of funds allocated for the development and welfare of the tribal people of the State.<sup>132</sup> Gradually, all these injustices and oppressions brought them on the threshold of adversity. The educated and articulated tribals rose against the injustice and socio-economic oppressions. They strongly urged the government to protect their economic interest, safeguard their culture and ensure equality and social justice.

The deprived tribal people became conscious of their identity under their tribal leaders who made it the focal point of group mobilization and initiated the demand for an autonomous plains tribal region. The structure of underdevelopment which the colonial rulers imposed on the tribal-feudal economy became widespread in the post-colonial period. Because the Independent government kept the salient features of the state system introduced by the colonial rulers rather than completely eradicated them.<sup>133</sup> The characteristic inner contradictions of the state system became more sharp in the post-Independence period. Thus, the system could neither improve the material conditions of the masses equally nor remove the oppressive socio-economic relations. Rather it had given rise to polarization of social groups in terms of religion, language, ethnic groups, etc., like the privileged Hindu upper caste, and landlord class, on the one hand, and deprived tribals, on the other.

The tribal people increasingly lost their confidence on the state government due to various reasons. The displeasure and disappointment of the tribals were clearly found reflected in the memorandum submitted by the PTCA to the President of India on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 1967 where they expressed their discontentment in the following words:

“There was a gulf difference between the proclaimed policy and practice. The State Government of Assam did never give weightage to the grievances of the plains tribals. The experience of the last 20 years of independence had given birth to a firm conviction in the minds of the plains tribals that the Assam Government did not have necessary goodwill towards the plains tribals to help them to protect their land, their way of life and grow according to their own genius and tradition. On the contrary it wanted to convert them into political beggaries to perpetuate their political domination by all means”.<sup>134</sup>

The frustration and disillusion that had been experienced by the plains tribes in the socio-economic milieu of the State as well as in the political field finally goaded them to decide to fight a political battle which would lead them to self-autonomy and political self-determination. The emerging leaders of the plains tribes firmly believed that they could determine the course of their own survival through the formation of independent

political organization which would play a vital role in projecting as well as solving all their pending issues in the immediate future and therefore expressed their decision to form a conglomerate political party of all the plains tribes of the Brahmaputra valley in the name and style as the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam (PTCA). Their decision was expressed in the same memoranda submitted to the President of India on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 1967 which says that the plains tribals had become disillusioned and did not want anymore to avoid political problems and devote themselves only in socio-economic activities. The betrayal of the Assam Government compelled them to take resolute stand and rose in struggle to defend their birth-right to preserve their land, language, culture and tradition which had by and large been incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Heroic, militant and zealous, defender of their identity through ages, the plains tribals decided to convert their grievances into a political movement and resolved to carry forward unflinchingly till their demands were fulfilled. With that view in end the plains tribals of Assam united themselves under the banner of the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam.<sup>135</sup>

On 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1967 the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, proposed to reorganize Assam on the basis of a federal structure in view of the growing demands for separate hills states to be carved out of Assam. Following the declaration of the Prime Minister, a purely non-political organization of students the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) was formed on 15 February, 1967. Though the Assamese students' organizations vehemently opposed the proposal of Prime Minister, the plains tribes including the Goalpara District Bodo Students' Union welcomed the idea of the reorganization of Assam on federal structure. Subsequently, the All Bodo Students' Union also welcomed the same proposal and demanded a separate political unit for the Bodos as their homeland in the plains of Assam. The birth of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) as a political organization for all the plains tribals in Assam was also, in fact, in response to the proposal of State re-organization announced by the then Prime Minister.<sup>136</sup>

After the Fourth General Election, the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political pressure group of the plains tribes was decided to form at a meeting held at Kokrajhar on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1967 in the presence of the all tribal leaders and workers who gathered from every corners of the Kokrajhar Sub-Division under the presidentship of Shri Modaram Brahma, an eminent educationist and a senior social leader.<sup>137</sup> Various

problems of the plains tribals were seriously discussed in the meeting and they finally arrived at conclusion that full autonomy alone could provide the plains tribals necessary conditions to preserve their language, culture and helped them grow according to their own genius and tradition. The meeting also discussed the Government of India's proposal for reorganization of Assam on federal structure. After serious discussions the meeting held the view that the federal plan was the most suitable one which at once can satisfy the political aspiration of the Hills people and other majority groups, particularly the plains tribals and contribute towards integration of the frontier State, based on mutual respect, goodwill and providing equal opportunity, and maintain the sovereignty of Indian Union.<sup>138</sup> An all Assam Organization under the name and title of the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam was also decided to form in the said meeting in order to continue the struggle for achieving full autonomy as well as an Action Committee was also formed to sustain the movement till the end. The members of the Action Committee travelled throughout the plains tribal areas of Assam to mobilize public opinion and formed the District *Ad-hoc* Plains Tribals' Councils of Assam.<sup>139</sup> Once again under the presidentship of Sri Modaram Brahma the Action Committee convened a meeting of all the *Ad-hoc* District Councils on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1967 which endorsed the decision of February 27, 1967 and formed the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam with Sri Biruchan Doley and Sri Samar Brahma Choudhury as its President and Vice-President respectively, and Charan Narzary as its General Secretary and Sri Pratul Kumar Bhabara and Sri Ajit Kumar Basumatary as its Joint Secretaries.<sup>140</sup>

The autonomy movements of the plains tribes in general and the Bodos in particular were given a further boosting by the creation of Plains Tribals' Council of Assam which marked a definite step forward in the field of political consciousness amongst the tribals. Kokrajhar was established as the head-quarter of the newly formed political Party. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session held at Edenbari on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1967, the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam adopted its constitution and in its third session held at Berbhanga near Baginadi Railway Station in the District of North Lakhimpur resolved to submit a memorandum of their grievances to the President of India and the Governor of Assam as well. The following were some of the major demands of the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam in the memorandum submitted to the President of India on 20 May, 1967: <sup>141</sup>

1. Full autonomy in the predominantly plains tribal areas of the northern tract of Lakhimpur, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara and Sibsagar districts including all the

tribal belts and blocks of those areas that the tribals could protect their land and themselves from the economic exploitation of the non-tribals bringing to an end the political domination over the tribals by the non-tribals, to have the opportunity to grow according to their genius and to conserve their traditional culture, custom and language.

2. The population which was existing in the year 1947 should be accepted as the base year for determining the areas where the plains tribes were predominant.
3. The plains tribal areas outside those proposed federating units for the plain tribals should be declared Scheduled Areas and be brought under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
4. As per the recommendation of the Dhebar Commission in Para 45 of chapter 11, the alienation of the tribal land to the non-tribals should be stopped.

Meanwhile, a study team of tribal development programmes of the Government of India visited Assam in 1968. The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam, along with the plains tribal MLAs and a minister of Assam Sri R.N. Brahma jointly submitted a memorandum to the team clearly stating that the tribal belts and blocks of Assam did not benefit the tribal people much and the Government of Assam did nothing serious to protect the tribal lands.<sup>142</sup>

The parliamentary bye- elections of Kokrajhar constituency held in July 1967 and May 1968 were boycotted by the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam as a step of agitation programme for demanding autonomous region which could able to draw them much needed public attention towards their objectives. Thousands of volunteers of the PTCA picketed polling booths during these elections and important leaders of the party were arrested and detained for about four months.<sup>143</sup> More than 80 per cent of the tribal people refrained from casting their votes.<sup>144</sup> The All Bodo Students' Union also extended its support to the PTCA movement and its activists along with many Bodo people considerably suffered when the parliamentary election was boycotted by the PTCA on May 19, 1968 in support of the demand for creation of a separate homeland for the Bodos.<sup>145</sup> The other aim of PTCA calling for boycotting the elections was primarily to demonstrate their disapproval against the devious delimitations of the Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies reserved for the plains tribals. The PTCA leaders organized a conference at Tezpur from 12 to 14 January, 1969 where they reiterated their demand for full autonomy to ensure peace and more efficient administration in the northern tracts of

Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur upto the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. In the mean time, the Assam Reorganisation Act for the formation of certain autonomous states within Assam was passed in 1969 which helped in intensifying the movement for autonomous region.<sup>146</sup> For the first time the PTCA contested an election in the 1971 mid-term poll which was followed by the participation in the general election in 1972 where they defeated a Cabinet Minister Ranendra Narayan Basumatary and returned its General Secretary Charan Narzary from Kokrajhar West (ST) Assembly Constituency.<sup>147</sup>

The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam once again submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, Srimati Indira Gandhi, on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1972 demanding fulfillment of their grievances. Thereafter, a two member delegation met the Prime Minister, Srimati Indira Gandhi, on 31<sup>st</sup> November 1972 and reiterated demand for the creation of an autonomous region called *Udayachal*. The two-member delegation also explained the Prime Minister how the various measures for tribal protection and welfare were crucial and essential for the development of the tribes and the nation.<sup>148</sup> The enactment of the North-eastern Areas Reorganization Act on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1971 that regularized the reorganization of the region into five states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and two Union territories-Mizoram and Arunachal provided strong impetus to the autonomy movement of the Bodos and in reaction to the enactment the PTCA stepped up its activity to accelerate their demand for Autonomous Region to its next level.<sup>149</sup> It also upgraded the demand for Autonomous Region to Union Territory under the nomenclature of *Udayachal* in January 1973. The series of mobilization activities adopted by the The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam in favour of *Udayachal* captivated the imagination of the plains tribes for a homeland of their own.

In 7<sup>th</sup> December 1973, the PTCA launched a movement demanding a separate Union Territory of *Udayachal* to be bifurcated from Assam comprising of all the plains tribals areas in the entire northern tract of the State. However, The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam had to postponed the movement for Udayachal for the time being as it coincided with the Bodo Sahitya Sabha's movement for demanding Roman Script for the Bodo language.<sup>150</sup> The movement for the Roman Script of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha also suffered a setback in spite of their large scale publicity efforts to awaken mass sentiment in favour of the Roman Script when they faced oppositions from the ruling party, the students and various cultural organizations as well as from the press of Assam.

Meanwhile, on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1973, the general session of the The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam was held at Baginadi, North Lakhimpur where delegates and representatives from all parts of the proposed *Udayachal* area attended and reiterated the earlier demands, opposed the Agricultural Farming Corporation of the Government of Assam and demanded re-delimitation of the Panchayat constituencies.<sup>151</sup> But the Assam Government and the local Assamese press openly joined issue against the plains tribals and started working out strategies to counter them politically. The Bodos were pushed into the defensive with persistent allegations that they getting money from the CIA. The local press also wrote virulent editorials against them and, won for them the sympathies of the pro-Congress Bodos, who had so far kept aloof from the PTCA movement.<sup>152</sup>

When the Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi visited Guwahati on 9 October 1973, the representatives of the hills and plains tribal communities met her where she appealed to the leaders of the various communities of the Northeast to work for the development of their areas and not to think in terms of separation to solve their problems.<sup>153</sup> The General Secretary of the The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam, Sri Charan Narzary released a statement on 25 October 1973 that the Union Government had sincerely understood the genuine issues and grievances of the plains tribals. He also maintained a strong point saying that problems of the tribals were not only of the question of economic development but also the question of their survival and existence. The anti-Udayachal propaganda launched by a section of the press during the visit of Prime Minister was also criticized by Narzary<sup>154</sup> The Roman Script and *Udayachal* movements were going on side by side with equal momentum and when the members of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam and the All Bodo Students' Union leaders began a *satyagraha* or non-violent movement in Kokrajhar Sub-Division, many of them were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). A delegation of The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam again met the Prime Minister in Delhi on December 1973 and submitted a memorandum requesting the Central Government to pay immediate attention to the wanton police atrocities carried out to the plains tribals. The memorandum also reiterated the earlier demand of The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam for a separate administrative set-up of *Udayachal*.<sup>155</sup>

As the Roman Script issue was somehow solved with the intervention of the Centre, the PTCA movement for Udayachal once again gained momentum. But the pace of the movement received a jolt when the nationwide emergency was clamped in 1975.



When emergency was lifted in 1977, the PTCA entered into alliance with the Janata Party on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1977 to contest the forthcoming election. The Plains Tribals' Council of Assam won only one seat in the 1977 election and that too was a ST reserved seat from Kokrajhar. However, the PTCA polled enough votes to earn recognition of the Election Commission of India as a regional political party of Assam and was awarded the reserve symbol of a Cultivator Cutting Crops.<sup>156</sup> According to electoral agreement with the Assam Janata Party, the PTCA candidates contested from nine constituencies in the sixth Assembly election, out of which the PTCA won only four seats and on the basis of the adjustment with the Janata Party and joined the Coalition Ministry headed by Golap Borbora. Samar Brahma Chaudhury was inducted as Cabinet Minister for forest representing the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam in the Borbora Ministry.<sup>157</sup> Prior to the induction of Samar Brahma Chaudhury to the Ministry, PTCA had made an agreement with the Janata Party on the following terms:<sup>158</sup>

1. The safeguard of various interests of the plains tribes including lands and their support in different fields like social, economic, and educational, in equality with other population of the state,
2. Initiative for the demarcation of the plains tribals' areas on the north bank,
3. The application of the provision of Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886, in the process of demarcation of areas in the south bank.
4. The establishment of a separate administrative apparatus of autonomous type for the above.

However, the Janata Government was dissolved before this agreement could be materialized and therefore created an unstable political condition in the State. The PTCA thought it unwise to launch an agitation programme at that time to pressurize the Union Government to fulfill their demand to create *Udayachal*. At that juncture, the party therefore confined itself to submitting memoranda from time to time. The party participated in the 1983 election and won three seats and became a part of the Keshab Gogoi headed Congress-I Ministry.<sup>159</sup> Samar Brahma Chaudhury once again was allotted the Ministry of Forest Department. The PTCA virtually had made no effort for the creation of *Udayachal* at that point of time and even the then MP of the Kokrajhar Parliamentary ST seat, Sri Charan Narzary, openly denounced the demand for *Udayachal* in the Parliament.<sup>160</sup> In 1985 election, the main election agenda of the PTCA was the

issue of *Udayachal* which ultimately brought victory to the PTCA candidate in one parliament constituency and three Assembly constituencies. After the election of 1985, Charan Narzary elected to the Legislative Assembly while Samar Brahma Chaudhury was elected as an MP.<sup>161</sup> That time too they forwarded again the earlier demand of Autonomous Region instead of voicing for a separate Union Territory. The ABSU vehemently opposed this move of the PTCA and they were severely criticized by the plains tribal people as the betrayer who exploited the sentiments of the Bodos and other plains tribals for the cause of a separate state. The party was also condemned for joining hands with both the Janata Party Government and the Congress-I Ministry during 1978-1982 overlooking the genuine political aspirations of the Bodos as well as other plains tribes.<sup>162</sup> As a result the PTCA was split up into two-the PTCA and PTCA (Progressive). By demanding creation of a separate State named *Mishing-Bodo Land* as homeland of the two plains tribes, this splinter group reflected its more progressive views as an ideology of their course of actions.<sup>163</sup>

On July 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 1980, the PTCA Progressive met the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and the Union Home Minister Giani Zail Singh respectively where the delegation was assured of a talk on the issue of creation of separate State. Subsequently, all tribal organizations were invited to join the discussion which was held on 20 August 1980 at Raj Bhawan, Shillong.<sup>164</sup> The discussion was chaired by the then Union State Minister for Home Affairs Jogendra Makwana who represented as Emissary of the Prime Minister. L.P. Singh, the then Governor of Assam and H.C. Sarin, Principal Adviser to the Governor of Assam also participated in the talk. Seventeen representatives from PTCA, PTCA (P), All Assam Tribal Sangha and All Assam Tribal Students' Union were present in the meeting which discussed the subjects like the creation of separate state for the plains tribals of Assam and the foreign national issue.<sup>165</sup> During the course of the discussion the Governor of Assam, L.P. Singh, suggested for a change of the name of the proposed homeland of the plains tribes of Assam from *Udayachal* to Bodoland. L.P. Singh had remarked that *Udayachal* was misnomer, Bodoland was the most appropriate linguistically.<sup>166</sup> Governor's suggestion convinced the minds of the Bodo leaders and therefore they soon changed the name of the proposed homeland from *Udayachal* to Bodoland.

A number of memoranda were submitted by the PTCA (P) to the Prime Minister of India between 1980 and 1983. The All Bodo Students' Union attempted to unify the

PTCA and PTCA (P) by organizing a convention at Harisingha of Udalguri District from the 17 to 19 April, 1984 wherein the PTCA (P) was dissolved and a new political party United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) was formed on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1984 under the Chairmanship of the then MLA Mr. Binai Khunggur Basumatary.<sup>167</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1984 the UTNLF first submitted memorandum for Separate Union Territory to the Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi in New Delhi giving nomenclature of Tribal Land to the proposed Union Territory. The UTNLF also submitted memorandum to the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1985 and 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1986.<sup>168</sup>

However, later on the party was also divided into two groups, the UTNLF and UBNLF. Thus, gradually the importance of PTCA began to die down and most of the tribal leaders as well as BSS and ABSU leaders also became dissatisfied and withdrew their support for *Udayachal* Movement finding the PTCA role unsatisfactory and finally it lost its hold on the *Udayachal* issue in 1985 General Election.

#### **All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and the Bodoland Movement:**

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) had already been submitting a number memorandum from 1972-1983 to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, President Giani Zail Singh and to the Home Minister of India demanding a separate state. Dissatisfied with the policies and working of the PTCA leaders, the ABSU again submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi on 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1985 with a demand to create a separate state. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1985, the ABSU leaders also met the then Home Minister S.B. Chavan requesting him to initiate immediate discussion for a separate State and solution to the foreign national issue.<sup>169</sup> The anti-tribal policy adopted by the AGP Government after coming to power in December, 1985 and losing all confidence in the PTCA and other senior leadership, the young ABSU leaders finding no other option than to fight a lone battle strongly resolved to continue the movement for a separate statehood under the dynamic and charismatic leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma who was elected as the president of ABSU in its 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Session held at Rowta from 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1986.<sup>170</sup> U N Brahma seriously endeavoured to unite the divided Bodos and initiated the work towards a common objective. The mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland gained popular momentum under his guidance and leadership. His charismatic and charming personality mobilized the Bodos throughout the State to actively participate in the ABSU movement through public rallies, meetings and seminars etc.<sup>171</sup> U N Brahma had started the student politics during

the Assam Movement while he was the executive member of the AASU. He restructured the organizational model of ABSU on the same model of AASU. In the 19th Annual session held at Dudhnoi in 1987, like the AASU Volunteer Force he also raised a Bodo Volunteer Force with Phukan Chandra Boro as Chairman and Anchula Gwra Bodosa as Convenor respectively. The Bodo Volunteer Force ostensibly was meant to organize the autonomy movement in a peaceful, non-violent and democratic way.<sup>172</sup> The Bodo volunteer force is not for violent movement but rather to control any sort of violence. Nevertheless, the Bodo Volunteer Force showed distinct signs of involvement in extremism like those of the AASU Volunteer Force.<sup>173</sup>

U N Brahma led a delegation of ABSU in New Delhi and submitted a memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, on 22 January 1987 demanding a separate state with Union territory status followed by submission of memorandum to the Union Home Minister Buta Singh on 24 January 1987 and then to the President of India Giani Zail Singh on 30 January 1987 respectively by the same delegation.<sup>174</sup> The ABSU also submitted 92-point Memorandum to the Governor of Assam and Meghalaya Mr. Bhisma Narain Singh at Rajbhawan, Gauhati on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1987 and also to the Chief Minister Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1987 at Janta Bhawan, Dispur.<sup>175</sup> Through the circulations of leaflets, pamphlet, writing wall posters, meetings etc., the ABSU began their mobilization programme against the Assamese chauvinism who were blamed for the alienation of tribal people of Assam.<sup>176</sup> Despite submission of so many memorandum and reminders, no progress was being made in bringing solution to the Bodoland issue. They had also unanimously decided to launch a democratic mass movement through the Gandhian path of non-violence from 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1987 if their demands were not fulfilled.<sup>177</sup>

Unfortunately, no initiative of discussion was coming in either from the State or from the Union Government. And no serious attention was paid to the demand made by ABSU. So the situation compelled the ABSU to begin a movement to fulfill their long standing political demands with effect from 2 March 1987. Accordingly, getting no response from the government, the ABSU for the first time declared a full-fledged political movement of the Bodos with a clear-cut demand of a separate statehood on the Northern Bank Brahmaputra in the state of Assam on 2nd March, 1987 by organizing mass rallies in the district headquarters which, later on, as the movement progressed, came to be popularly known as the Bodoland Movement.<sup>178</sup> The next step of the

movement was the mass demonstration staged in front of the Deputy Commissioner, Sub-Divisional Officer and other important government offices on 23 March, 1987. That was followed by mass rallies in the entire Anchalik Committees of Assam which prepared the ground for a massive central rally at Guwahati Judge's Filed on 12 June, 1987. Bodos from almost every corner of the State joined the rally to make it a grand success. That was the first largest rally ever organized by the Bodos of Assam on demand for a separate state and there echoed the slogans like *Divide Assam-Fifty Fifty, No Separate State-No Rest, Do or Die for Homeland* etc.<sup>179</sup>

While returning home from the rally of 12 June, 1987 a group of participants was attacked by some miscreants after crossing Barama, at Tihu Chawk. Fallen into sudden terror and panic, the victims asked for help from the nearest police station but they were refused.<sup>180</sup> Instead, the Patacharkuchi police arrested fifty-eight passengers of a bus, of whom fifteen were girls. Many of the rally goers were injured in this clash and Sujit Narzay, a student of Class X of Kokrajhar Higher secondary School also got injured in the attack and later died of head injury.<sup>181</sup> The next day ABSU delegation met the Chief Minister seeking justice and accordingly all the arrested victims who were later transferred to Nalbari jail, were released. The killing of Sujit Narzary was protested by boycotting the classes, holding rallies and wearing black badges on 16 June 1987. The ABSU, as a mark of respect for his supreme sacrifice, declared Sujit Narzary as the first martyr of Bodoland Movement.<sup>182</sup>

Another centrally organized public protest was held on 2 July 1987 from 10 AM to 3.00 P.M. in front of the Janata Bhawan, Dispur where thousands of supporters of ABSU participated shouting slogans demanding the separate homeland for the Bodos. A reminder of the previous demand for fulfilling their aspiration for a separate homeland was also submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam.<sup>183</sup> On 10 July 1987, the ABSU organized a Mass Religious Prayer and Oath-taking ceremony for the successful solution of their 92-point demands as well as the demand for a separate state which were held in the District Committee level through their respective religious persuasion- Bathou, Brahma and Christianity.<sup>184</sup> The ABSU Volunteers and supporters prayed to their respective gods in the prayer meeting as well as took the oath to *Do or Die* for the cause of the separate state. Another programme of a mass hunger-strike was also organized on 10 August from 6 AM to 4.30 PM in front of the DC's, SDO and SDC's offices on the same day.<sup>185</sup> In connection with the mass hunger strike many ABSU volunteers were

arrested on August 10, 1987. Following this the ABSU called for a 12 hours Tribal area *bandh* on 27<sup>th</sup> August, a 24 hour National Highway Blockade at Lailangpara near Rowta Chariali in Darrang District on 9 September and a 36 hour Tribal area *bandh* on 24-25 September 1987.<sup>186</sup> During the road blockade on 24-25 September 1987 at the 52 National Highway at Lailangpara near Rowta in Darrang District the Police resorted to firing on the ABSU Volunteers killing Kabiram Basumatary of aged 28 years and Alendra Basumatary of aged 18 years and injuring Sabin Goyari seriously. In many places police resorted to lathicharge and many volunteers also were taken into custody.<sup>187</sup>

In protest against the police firing and brutal killing of their volunteers at Lailangpara, the ABSU organized a rally at Anchalik level and a 12- hour Darrang district *bandh* on 15 September 1987.<sup>188</sup> The police also opened fire on the ABSU Volunteers on 31 National Highway near Serfanguri in Kokrajhar district on 25 September killing one Obhiram Muchahary on the spot during the 36- hour *bandh* on 24-25 September, 1987. The District administrations imposed prohibitory orders under section 144 Cr.P.C. to control the situations but that totally failed to suppress the public sentiment.<sup>189</sup> On 12 October, 1987 a village level meetings were organized to gain mass support for a separate homeland. Processions were taken out at important places throughout the State in which traditional musical instruments were exhibited on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1987. At the Boat Club in New Delhi, a mass demonstration was organized on 10 and 11 November, 1987 where many volunteers, activists and supporters of the ABSU's statehood movement participated.<sup>190</sup>

In the mean time ABSU submitted another memorandum to the President, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister of India on 10 November 1987 reiterating their 92-point demands.<sup>191</sup> The AGP Government adopted policies to cripple the Bodo Movement, along with which the AASU too campaigned to resist the Bodo movement. That only resulted in the alienation and the separatist tendencies during the 16 month long rule of *Asom Gana Parichad* Government.<sup>192</sup> During the *bandh* called by ABSU on 9 September 1987, the ABSU volunteers were attacked by the AASU and AGP supporters at Gahpur. The ABSU volunteers reportedly did not get any help from the police. The *bandh* on the same day at Bongaigaon was also obstructed by these two opposition groups.<sup>193</sup> With two other important programmes of the ABSU the year 1987 ended without any significant solution being achieved by the Bodos. The first programme

was being the 48 hour *rail roko* from 5 A.M. of 26 November to 5 A.M. of 28 November and the second programme was the 48 hour National Highway Blockade from 5 A.M. of 9 December to 5 A.M. of 11 December.<sup>194</sup>

There was no slightest sign of slackened among the ABSU activists since the commencement of their movement from 2 March 1987 despite repressive measures adopted by the State Government to obstruct the various democratic programmes of the movement. The ABSU organized programmes in 15 phases in 1987 alone but there was no positive attempt initiated by the Government to solve the genuine demands of the plains Tribals. The negative approach and outlook of the political mainstream ruling clique of Assam hardened the tribal mind and hence the year 1988 commenced with more and more programmes planned by the ABSU to accelerate the course of the movement.

The 1988 programme began the *Great Mass Rallies* organized in the district headquarters by the respective District Committees of the ABSU on 4 January. The next important programme was a protest against L.N. Tamuli, the Additional Deputy Commissioner-cum-Additional District Magistrate, who was transferred to Kokrajhar from the Karbi Anglong District. 12 hour Kokrajhar district *bandh* was called by ABSU on 11 January 1988 from 5 AM demanding the transfer of L.N. Tamuli apprehending the imminent danger who exhibited anti-tribal feeling and sentiment.<sup>195</sup> At Sidli Kashikotra, the police forces opened fire during this *bandh* killing one Swarka Narzary on the spot.<sup>196</sup>

On 18 January 1988, Upendra Nath Brahma met R. Venkataraman, the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi and submitted a memorandum to the President. Again, on 22 January 1988 a five member delegation of ABSU also met Chintamani Panigrahi, the Union Minister of State for Home, and submitted a memorandum to him.<sup>197</sup>

While the movement was in full swing, a reign of terror was let loose to the Bodo tribe. On the night of 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 1988, eight women of Bhumka Village of Kokrajhar District were raped repeatedly by the Assam police force personnel that were condemned by all sections of people.<sup>198</sup> The police atrocities continued and the incident at Bhumka was followed by repeated raids in the Bodo villages, burning of houses and the arrests and torture on ABSU volunteers and supporters.<sup>199</sup>

While the cruelty and repression of the Assam police was on, the All Assam tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) had submitted a memorandum raising their

voice against the police atrocities to the Union Home Minister on 3 February 1988 praying for taking necessary action to protect the Bodo women from inhuman torture including gang rape by the State police.<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, the ABSU continued their agitations with more strength and staged a two days Relay-Hunger Strike in front of the D.C. and S. D. O. offices on the 10 and 11 February, 1988 with the participation of large number of ABSU activists and supporters.<sup>201</sup> From 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 1988, a 100 Hour National Highway blockade was called and the next step of the movement was a peaceful *Padayatra* on 18 April, 1988 through the National Highways. The Assam police resorted to lathicharge to the participants of the *Padayatra* and injured hundreds including women as prohibitory order under section 144 Cr.P.C was imposed by the Kokrajhar District Administration.<sup>202</sup>

The ABSU, losing all their faith in democratic movement due to the utter negligence of the State Government in dealing with the tribal people and due to inactiveness of the Central Government which all along remained silent spectator, gave a call for a 72 hour Assam *bandh* from 5 AM of 27 April 1988 as the twentieth phase of the Movement.<sup>203</sup> This *bandh* called by ABSU, though they claimed it democratic and peaceful yet it was marked by violence. Through the media, the police and the official circle claimed that the ABSU volunteers resorted to large scale violence during the *bandh*. The Assam Director General of Police reported that there were 28 bomb blasts in Kokrajhar and Udalguri sub-division during the 72 hour Assam *bandh*. The police recovered and defused 23 live bombs. Two loaded trucks were set ablaze, while several houses belonging to non-tribals were burnt down. At least two wooden bridges were set afire. Improvised bazooka type devices were also used by the ABSU. Nearly 300 people had been arrested so far.<sup>204</sup> The ABSU called it an attempt to spread anti-movement propaganda by the Government of Assam.

On 3 May 1988, the United Tribals' National Liberation Front (UTNLF) submitted a memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India criticizing the AGP Government's policies to suppress the plains tribals' aspiration while urging him to meet their demand for a Tribal Land immediately to avoid further deterioration of the situation, which the AGP Government had openly declined to accept during the 1988 budget session in the Assembly.<sup>205</sup>

Meanwhile the Assam Government took oppressive measures to control the movement and the police forces continued their atrocities. The Assam police opened fire



on the volunteers at Rangapara near Gossaigaon in Kokrajhar district killing one Ganjer Basumatary (aged 28 years).<sup>206</sup> In the early hours of 9 May, the police raided the village Sonai Serfung near Udalguri in Darrang district and fired indiscriminately killing one innocent villager Purna Daimary (aged 16 years) and injuring several others. Thereafter, the ABSU called for a 12 hour Tribal Area *bandh* from 6 AM on 17 May 1988 in protest against the inhuman incident as well as demanding judicial inquiry and punishment to the culprits.<sup>207</sup> The police atrocities committed on 9 May was also condemned by the All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) through a press release on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1988 where they severely criticized the role played by the State Government in creating of tension in the wake of the ABSU movement for a separate State, which was much constitutional and democratic in nature.<sup>208</sup>

The Assam police again indiscriminately fired on a peaceful procession held by ABSU at Saraibil area under Gossaigaon Police Station in Kokrajhar district on 12 May 1988 and killed Gaide Basumatary (aged 32 years) on the spot and injuring one Helena Basumatary (aged 15 years). The latter succumbed to her injuries and later died in hospital. The ABSU strongly condemned the police firing and demanded immediate stoppage of police atrocities, raiding villages and killing of innocent Bodos, *ex-gratia* grants to the bereaved families, judicial inquiries to the police firing case and unconditional release of the arrested persons.<sup>209</sup>

Further, the ABSU called for a 100 hour *Rail-cum-Rasta Roko* from 5 AM on 14 June in protest against the policies of the AGP Government. The ABSU thereafter decided to further intensify the movement for a separate State and called a *100 hour Assam bandh* as the twenty-fifth phase of their programme, from 11 July, 1988. The programme set for the twenty-fourth phase was *Dharmayagna* (religious prayer) and oath-taking at Anchalik levels to achieve the target.<sup>210</sup>

Meanwhile the Assam Chief Minister invited the ABSU leaders for a discussion on the Bodo issue to be held on 27 June, 1988. On receiving the invitation, the ABSU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister forwarding a set of ten demands as agenda for discussion. The points mentioned by the ABSU were refused by the Assam Government and as a result the Union lost their confidence in the Government, and the ABSU and all the other democratic organizations of the tribals termed the Assam Government as a *Liar Government*.<sup>211</sup>

Considering all the repressive actions of the Assam Government and against its imposition of Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) in 1987, the ABSU appealed to all the Bodos to observe 15<sup>th</sup> August 1988 as a *Black Day* as a mark of peaceful fight to free the Bodos from the yoke of bondage. A *12 hour bandh* also decided on that occasion from 5 AM to boycott the Independence Day celebrations. Further, *five days office bandh* from 16<sup>th</sup> August was decided as the twenty-sixth phase of their movement.<sup>212</sup>

Other ethnic organizations like *All Cachar-Karimganj Students' Association* (ACKSA) and *All Assam Minorities Students' Union* (AAMSU) extended their moral support to the ABSU led movement from time to time. However major opposition to the movement at that stage came from the AGP Government in particular and the Assamese in general. Further, a joint meeting held between ABSU, ACKSA and AAMSU on 28 August 1988 under the presidentship of UN Brahma resolved to launch a joint movement by organizing a 50-hour Railway Blockade in Assam from 5 AM on September 1988.<sup>213</sup>

The All Bodo Students' Union again called for a 12 hour *bandh* on 11 October beginning from 5 AM demanding unconditional release of Phukan Chandra Boro, Chairman of the Volunteer's Force, ABSU, Anchula Gwra Bodoso, Convener and Assistant General Secretary of the same organization and Haliram Boro who were arrested without warrant on 3 October at Dhudnai.<sup>214</sup> Again a call for four days office *bandh* during 12-16 October was given in protest against the refusal by the district authority to hold a mass rally at Kokrajhar on 13 October, and to protest the police lathicharge on The All Bodo Students' Union volunteers during the peaceful padayatra on 4 October.<sup>215</sup>

From 30 October 1988, The All Bodo Students' Union leaders put their movement temporarily under suspension due to the invitation made by the State Government for discussions. ABSU utilized this period of suspension in organizational activities too. ABSU felt the necessity of another broad based mass organization to achieve their objectives. That resulted in the formation of the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) on 18 November 1988.<sup>216</sup> The basic purpose of the organization was to embrace all the people in the Bodoland Movement.

The Bashbari Conference of ABSU which was held from 19 to 22 December 1988 was a significant event in the history of ABSU movement for a separate state in which it decisively affirmed to begin the next phase of movement for a separate state.

Delegates from the Tripuri Students Federation (TSF), All Cachar-Karimganj Students Association (ACKSA), Tripura Sundari Nari Bahani (TSNB), All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU), etc. attended the Conference. This conference was also remarkable in terms of attendance where lakhs of Bodo people and around thirty-five thousand representatives from the ABSU and BPAC attended it.<sup>217</sup> In that conference ABSU formally declared its suspension of the 89 non-political demands retaining only the three political demands and upgrading the demand for Union Territory to full-fledged Statehood for more autonomy and political power. A new nomenclature *Bodoland* was given to the proposed state.<sup>218</sup> The United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front (UBNLF) extended its support for a *separate state* which would only be able to preserve the Bodo identity. The Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) also welcomed the decision and called it a *revolution*. They confirmed their decision to remain with The ABSU to make their movement for Bodoland a successful one. The BPAC further requested the centre to begin a talk with the ABSU for the solution of Bodo issue.<sup>219</sup>

All the prominent tribal organizations of Assam held a series of discussions on 16-17 January, 1989 on various problems of the plains tribes of Assam. The meetings which were presided over by Samar Brahma Chaudhury discussed the matter of unity and solidarity of the plains tribals.<sup>220</sup> The ABSU and UBNLF did not join the meeting. The UBNLF submitted another memorandum to the Governor of Assam and Meghalaya, Bhishma Narayan Singh, on 29 January, 1989 demanding separate Bodoland. They also urged through this memorandum that discussion and negotiation with the ABSU and UBNLF leaders should be immediately initiated by the Central Government to solve the political issue forthwith to avoid further deterioration of the situation in the State under the AGP rule.<sup>221</sup>

Finding no significant development in solving the Bodoland issue till to that period of time, the ABSU-BPAC decided to resume the movement which was temporarily suspended by ABSU on 30 October, 1988. The State Government organized an informal talk with The ABSU on 11 January, 1989 but failed to achieve satisfactory solution. The ABSU accused the State Government for lack of moral courage to invite them for a formal dialogue. They therefore planned further movement programme by declaring 120 hour Assam *bandh* from 5 AM on 16 February and next 175 hour Assam *bandh* from 5 AM on 2 March to fulfill their demand.<sup>222</sup>

The Government tightened the security measures and the Army staged flag march in the Kokrajhar district, but still then the violent activities were rampant during the *bandh* hours in the Udalguri Sub-division and in the Kokrajhar district. As reported by the print media, 7 persons, 8 terrorists were killed and 35 Bodo militants including a *Havildar* giving training to the Bodo militants during *bandh* hour were arrested.<sup>223</sup> Wanton killings and attacks on Plains Tribals' Council of Assam and Asom Gana Parishad leaders and supporters became the order of the day. Attacks on police stations and police patrolling parties by the Bodo militants also increased even after the end of the *bandh* period. Describing the situation prevailing in the state, the Home Minister of Assam wrote to the Union Home Minister stating that the movement had proved to be neither mass based nor democratic. The movement had become an excuse to murder innocent persons, including political workers, to loot highway drivers and selected businessmen and to destroy public property. It certainly could not be the objective of any democratic and peaceful movement to shoot dead an Assistant Headmaster who went to hoist the national flag on 26 January 1989.<sup>224</sup>

The Union Home Minister gave a suggestion to the Home Minister of Assam to initiate a dialogue with the ABSU after reviewing the grave situation of the State. The Assam Home Minister Bhriagu Phukan, being advised by the Union Home Minister invited the ABSU leaders to a talk on 28 February 1989 as well as requested them to call off their agitation programmes to create a congenial atmosphere for discussion. The ABSU refused to accept the Home Minister's invitation and they made it clear that they would participate in the discussion only if representative of the Centre was present as observer.<sup>225</sup> While the negotiation for talks was going on between the ABSU- BPAC leaders with the Government of Assam, the Bodo leaders called for a 175- hour Assam *bandh* from 5 A M of 2 March 1989. The *bandh* period created severe unrest situations and therefore maintenance of law and order became very difficult. During the *bandh*, 16 persons died including 8 militants and 1 Home guard while 63 burning cases were recorded, bomb blasts occurred for 29 times at different places and police and security forces were attacked for 41 times. Apart from that the police arrested 16 Bodo militants. But even after the *bandh* period was over, the situation did not show any improvement

<sup>226</sup>

The ABSU was again invited by the State Government to join in formal talk on 23 March, 1989 but they denied it for the reason that they did not want the participation

of other political parties invited by the State in the talk except the representatives of the State and Central Government. However, the ABSU shortened the earlier scheduled programme of *15 day Assam bandh* on 27 March, 1989 to a 10 day *bandh* keeping in view the invitation sent by the State Government for negotiation so as to create a congenial atmosphere for the discussion.<sup>227</sup>

The ABSU was again invited for a talk on 17 April, 1989 by the State Home Minister but again it turned down the offer, expressing their unwillingness to join the talk in the absence of any Central representative as witness.<sup>228</sup> Assam Home Minister was disappointed with the decision of ABSU and sternly replied back that the next talk between the Government and the ABSU would be held without any precondition of the ABSU.<sup>229</sup> In response to that, ABSU declared that in future they would never sit with the State Government for negotiation since they find the State Government irresponsible.<sup>230</sup> The ABSU, however, received another conditional invitation from the Chief Minister for a tripartite talk on 29 June, 1989 in which one of the conditions was that the question of division of Assam should not arise in the discussion. The ABSU outrightly felt that this very proposal of the AGP Government reaffirmed that the government had no interest in solving the Bodo problem through negotiation. The Central Government also never came forward to solve the issue.<sup>231</sup>

The Assam Government brought Kokrajhar district under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955, on 6 July 1989 due to relentless agitational programmes undertaken by the ABSU and BPAC.<sup>232</sup> Chief Minister of Assam decided to hold talks with the ABSU leaders in the presence of a Central observer as there was no break to incidence of violence. Consequently, State Government persuaded Union Government to send one Central observer to witness the talks between Assam Government and ABSU-BPAC leaders.<sup>233</sup> However, the leaders of the ABSU-BPAC expressed their refusal and unwillingness alleging that the stage had already been over for Central observer.<sup>234</sup> Besides, the ABSU-BPAC leaders demanded the Assam Government to arrange talks outside the state on security grounds.<sup>235</sup>

Finally, due to the growing tension and gloomy situation, Government of Assam decided to hold talks in New Delhi and issued invitation to ABSU- BPAC leaders and the ABSU also at last agreed to join the tripartite talk on 28 August, 1989 with Union Government and Assam Government. The talk was the outcome of the discussion held between the Union Home Minister and Chief Minister of Assam in August 1989 in New

Delhi. As a positive gesture the ABSU suspended the ongoing 1001 hour Assam *bandh* so as to create peaceful atmosphere for the talks proposed to be held on 28 August 1989 bringing a sense of relief to the people of the affected areas.<sup>236</sup>

In the first round of Tripartite Talks which was held in New Delhi on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1989, ABSU- BPAC team was led by Upendra Nath Brahma, the President of ABSU, while Assam Government was led by its Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and the Union Government was led by Dr (Mrs.) Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Union Minister of State for Welfare.<sup>237</sup>

The talk was held in a friendly manner. An understanding was reached whereby all punitive measures would be withdrawn provided the Bodo agitation was suspended and violence stopped. Since it was a casual understanding and not a written accord, the contracting parties, remained free to indulge in violence due to natural distrust. The Tripartite which was held on 28 August, 1989 talk was therefore not a success.<sup>238</sup>

There were as many as nine rounds of official talks and several informal talks between the ABSU- BPAC leaders, the Union Government and the Assam Government took place starting from the Tripartite Delhi Talks on 28 August 1989 till to the signing of BAC Accord on 20 February 1993.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> round of tripartite talks was held on 5 October 1989 where the ABSU-BPAC team reiterated their demand for the creation a separate state of Bodoland on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. However, Dr. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai had clearly overruled any further division of the State.<sup>239</sup> Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the Chief Minister of Assam, assured to the ABSU-BPAC team that the Government of Assam would examine an appropriate legal, political and administrative arrangement acceptable to all the sections of people in the State.<sup>240</sup> Thus, the Assam and Union Government discarded the Bodoland demand of the Bodos. The only viable outcome of the talk was Ram Vilas Paswan, the Union Minister of Labour and Welfare, who suggested setting up a committee which would comprise of the Central Government, State Government and Bodo representatives. The ABSU-BPAC reiterated their demand to initiate the third round of talk at the earliest or else they would be compelled to resume the agitation.<sup>241</sup>

Due to a change of Government at the Centre the third round of discussion tentatively scheduled for November 1989 was postponed. The National Front formed Government with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) participating in it. The Bodo leaders did

not tolerate the delay and they threatened to restart the agitational programmes from January 1990 in the event of the failure of the resumption of talks by 31 December 1989.<sup>242</sup> Ultimately the pressure given by Bodo leaders yielded results and the third round of tripartite talk was held at New Delhi on 11 January 1996. Twenty-member team of ABSU-BPAC led by Upendra Nath Brahma participated the talk. While on the Governments' behalf, Ram Vilash Paswan, the Union Labour and Welfare Minister and Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the Chief Minister of Assam represented the Central and Assam Government respectively.<sup>243</sup> The Chief Minister of Assam once again rejected the proposal for a separate state. Ram Vilash Paswan, the Union Minister however suggested the Assam Government to consider the grievances put forward by ABSU- BPAC in a practical manner so that early solution could be found without any further delay to the Bodo problem.<sup>244</sup> The third round of tripartite talk also virtually yielded nothing.

The tripartite talks were held in a same manner upto the sixth round and neither the State nor the Central Government did intend to yield the demand of a separate state, while the ABSU-BPAC leadership every time insisted on to their demand without any compromise. Therefore, no solution was possible as the process continued for almost a year until the ABSU-BPAC grew wild and threatened to break off negotiations unless their demand was seriously attended to in the next round.

The State Government, in the seventh round tripartite talk came forward with a proposal for *autonomous three-tier Panchayati Raj structure* for tribal areas. The ABSU leaders expressed their dissatisfaction over it. The seventh round of talk was also concluded without any concrete result. Ram Vilash Paswan, the representative of the Union Government, came up with a proposal in the form of a resolution in the Eighth Round of Tripartite Talks held on 13 September 1990 that stated the Government of India was deeply concerned about the problems of Bodos and other Plains tribals of Assam and committed to solve their economic development and other rights. On serious consideration of the Bodo problem, the Government of India proposes that a three member committee of Experts could be set up to determine the areas of the Bodos and other Plains tribes to the north of river Brahmaputra and make recommendations as to the autonomy, legislative, administrative and financial power that might be given to them. The committee would consult all the groups concerned and would submit its report within forty five days to the Government of India.<sup>245</sup>

The ABSU- BPAC accepted the proposal after a moderate changes and amendments to certain points of their disagreement. But the State Government did not sent consent immediately, rather sought a full month time to give their opinion on the proposal. The attitude of the State Government further strengthened the ABSU argument that the AGP Government lacked sincere interest and hence the problem could not be solved without the centre's intervention.<sup>246</sup>

The ABSU-BPAC leaders kept on urging the government to set up immediately a three-member expert committee as per the suggestion of the Union Government. In a Press Trust of India press conference they also stated that the State election be postponed until the Bodoland problem was solved.<sup>247</sup> The Bodo leaders had no other choice but to serve an ultimatum to the government threatening to resume their movement if their demands were not conceded by the end of February 1991.<sup>248</sup> Perhaps the threat worked and the Centre, without further delay, constituted the three-member expert committee on 25 February 1991. The committee, headed by Bhupinder Singh, IAS, to demarcate the areas of the Bodos and other issues to make recommendations on autonomy demand had two other members, they were Dr. K. S. Singh, IAS, Director General, Anthropological Survey of India, and A. M. Gokhale, IAS, Joint Secretary, Department of Rural Development, Government of India. The Committee was to submit its report within three months to the Government of India.<sup>249</sup>

The Committee ultimately submitted its report to the Union Government on 30 March 1992. Meanwhile Government changed both at the Centre and State, and the Congress-I captured power both at the State and in the Centre in 1991. Hiteswar Saikia became the Chief Minister of Assam while P.V. Narasingha Rao as the Prime Minister of India. The Committee in its report recommended for the formation of two Apex Councils- one for the Bodos in the Western-Central sector and the other for the Mishings in the Eastern sector with three-tier politico administrative structures along with the proposal to grant the Bodos *maximum autonomy short of separate state* within the Indian Union. However, the ABSU-BPAC leaders refused to accept the formulae with the argument that they were determined to achieve a separate State i.e. Bodoland.<sup>250</sup> In their memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister P. V. Narasingha Rao and Home Minister S B. Chavan, ABSU- BPAC said that the Report can never meet the hopes and aspirations of the Bodos.<sup>251</sup>



When Hiteswar Saikia became the Chief Minister of Assam, he took keen interest to solve the Bodo issue and with a view to find out a solution a series of meetings of all political parties was conducted in May, June and August 1992. Finally, Saikia Government came out with a proposal for giving *maximum autonomy* to the Bodos. It proposed the creation of a *30 Member Bodoland Autonomous Council* with the jurisdiction of having power over the villages with fifty per cent Bodo population. In the proposal, there were also provisions for the *Bodo Regional Council and Panchayat* forming the middle and bottom level units.<sup>252</sup>

However, the Bodo leaders discarded the recommendations of the all Party meetings and reiterated their demand for a separate state declaring that without a separate state the hopes and aspirations of the Bodos could not be fulfilled.<sup>253</sup> They, therefore, to fulfill their demand once again revived the call for a 1001 hour Assam *bandh* from 5 A.M. of 24 November 1992 demanding the creation of Bodoland along with two autonomous districts councils-the Lalung District Council and the Nilachal District Council. But the Bodo leadership differed the *bandh* call and agreed to solve the problem through dialogue due to the intervention of the Union Home Minister.<sup>254</sup>

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Rajesh Pilot, undertook the initiative for arriving at an amicable settlement of the vexed Bodo issue and succeeded in reducing the differences between the State Government and the ABSU-BPAC leadership. The Union Minister finally convinced the Bodo leaders to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the Bodo problem and the Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) popularly known as the Bodo Accord was signed on 20 February 1993 between the State Government of Assam and the ABSU- BPAC leadership.<sup>255</sup> Thus, the six year long Bodo Autonomy Movement was finally brought to an end.

However, just after three years elapsed, the Bodoland movement started again in 1996. The lack of sincerity on the part of government never ended the issue of boundary demarcation of the Autonomous Council. The demarcation did not satisfy all sections of the Bodo people. The ABSU-BPAC leaders demanded the inclusion of 10 km stretch on the Bhutan border which the Centre denied due to border security reason. Secondly, the reserved forest being a central subject was not included in BAC area. Thirdly, Srirampur border gate between Assam and Bengal, some important places such as Darrang, Tangla etc. were not included in the Council. The grounds put forwarded by the Government for excluding those areas and places, however, did not have any constitutional basis. The

boundary demarcation of the BAC was not drawn till 1996.<sup>256</sup> So the thought of resuming the statehood movement came to people's mind. Lack of political will was frequently compounded by mindless bureaucrats who almost turn the Bodo Accord into a farce.

The creation of BAC, therefore, failed to fulfill and satisfy the aspirations of the Bodos. Rather it gave rise to unprecedented problems like violent conflicts among cross sections of rival Bodo groups, and the ethnic killings between Bodo and non-Bodo people. There were many incidents of killings, extortions and sabotage activities during the post-BAC formation period. One of the major issues of this period was the ideological conflict between the two sections of the Bodos – one section supporting the solution of the Bodo problem within the Indian Union and another aiming for a sovereign Bodoland. The *Boro Security Force* (BrSF) outrightly rejected the BAC Accord signed by ABSU. It continued its campaign of terror, extortions, kidnappings killings and sabotage activities. On September 20, 1995, the BrSF shot dead the Branch Manager of the Assam Co-operative Society in Kokrajhar district and also attacked the Basugaon Unit office of ABSU in Kokrajhar district and killed two ABSU members.<sup>257</sup> In another incident, BrSF attacked the ABSU office at Kashikotra.<sup>258</sup> The Boro Security Force (BrSF) was suspected in killing eight persons of Bengali community at Subhaspalli on 10 October, 1995.<sup>259</sup> They were also suspected to killed five CRPF personnel on 21 February, 1996 in Kokrajhar district.<sup>260</sup> There were many more sabotaging incidents suspected to be carried out by the BrSF activists which created severe law and order crisis in the State.

Meanwhile, another Bodo extremist organization called Bodo Liberation Tigers popularly known as BLT was formed in 1996. Conforming to the political demands of the ABSU, the BLT adopted an ideology of creating a separate state remaining within the Indian sovereign. On the other hand, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB, new name adopted by BrSF on 3 October 1996) had a dream of a sovereign state comprising the Bodo dominated areas, but did not receive support of any Bodo organization. As a result, the NDFB seemed to consider all Bodo organizations as its enemies. Confrontation from time to time became inevitable.<sup>261</sup>

In its 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference held from 3 to 5 March 1996 at Langhin Tinali, Karbi Anglong, ABSU adopted a resolution on 4 March to denounce the Bodo Accord and to resume the movement of separate state.<sup>262</sup> As the ABSU decided to revive their struggle for a separate state, it became necessary for them to start a dialogue with all the

Bodo political parties to bring them under one platform. S.K. Bwiswmutiary led faction of Bodoland Peoples' Party was dissolved on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1996 paving the way for unification process. In the meantime, Premising Brahma led faction of BPP broke ties with the Hiteswar Saikia-led Congress-I State Government. Blaming the State Government for step-motherly treatment, Premising Brahma resigned from the Interim Council and dissolved his faction of BPP on March 26, 1996.<sup>263</sup> The ABSU formed another organization known as the *Bodoland Statehood Movement Council* (BSMC) bringing together both the factions. The BPAC was also revived by ABSU in its Annual Conference held from 1 to 3 April 1998 at Dudhnoi which was dissolved in 1993 after signing the BAC Accord. The ABSU-BPAC termed the 1993 Bodoland Accord as betrayal to the Bodos and demanded the scrapping of the Accord. The ABSU in its 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference held at Dotoma declared a fresh movement beginning on February 20, 1999 to pressurize the Central Government for a separate state of Bodoland.<sup>264</sup>

Meanwhile, BJP led National Democratic Alliance came to power at the Centre under the Prime Ministership of Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1999. The ABSU-BPAC backed lone Bodo MP also supported the NDA Government and thereby helped to bring to a cease-fire agreement with banned outfit, the Bodo Liberation Tigers, which came into effect from 15 March, 2000.<sup>265</sup> Following the cease-fire agreement the Bodo Liberation Tigers has stopped its violent and sabotage activities. After several rounds of dialogues held between the Government of Assam and Government of India on the one hand and the BLT, ABSU and BPAC on the other to arrive at a satisfactory solution to the vexed Bodoland issue. As a result, in 10 February, 2003 another Bodo Accord known as the Bodoland Territorial Areas Districts (BTAD) popularly known as BTC Accord was signed between the BLT, State and Central Government.<sup>266</sup> The tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Special Secretary (North-East) RC Jain on behalf of Ministry of Home Affairs, State Chief Secretary P K Datta and Chairman of BLT Hagram Mohilary.<sup>267</sup> Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, State Health Minister Bhumidhar Barman and State Government officials besides the top leaders of ABSU, BPAC, BSS, and ABWWF were present on the occasion of signing the Accord. The BTC Accord became a central Act under the provision of Sixth Schedule with many important provisions including a centrally funded technical institution, recognition of the Bodo Language under the Eight Schedule of the Constitution besides reviewing of cases pending against the BLT were granted in the new settlement.<sup>268</sup> After dissolving the BAC an interim Executive Council for BTC was to be

set up. The Bodo language Bill was tabled in the Parliament in August 2003 and the ST Amendment Bill was passed by Lok Sabha was sent for approval to President.<sup>269</sup> Though the ABSU-BPAC did not become signatory they gave their full support and consent to the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). But the ABSU revived their demand for Statehood and continuing their agitation for Bodoland state even today.

### Endnotes

1. Ajay Roy, *The Bodo Imbroglia*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1995, p. 41.
2. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *Social Mobility: From Tribalism to Indianism: The Bodos: (The Aboriginal People of Eastern India)*, Kokrajhar, Onsumoi Library, 2008, p. 247.
3. D.P. Mukherjee and S.K. Mukherjee, "Contemporary Cultural and Political Movements among the Bodos of Assam" in *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, First Published 1982, Reprinted 2006, 2015, p. 258.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Ajay Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Khema Sonowal, *Why Bodo Movement?* Guwahati, EBH Publishers, 2013, p. 45.
8. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *op.cit.* 247.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Kameswar Brahma, *A Study of Socio-Religious Belief, Practice and Ceremonies of Boros*, Calcutta, 1992, p.194.
14. Kalidas Nag, "The Brahma Samaj", *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 6, Ed., Haridas Bhattacharya, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956, pp. 613-633.

15. M.C. Saikia, "The Brahma Movement among the Bodo-Kachais of Goalpara District" in *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol- 1, ed. by K.S. Singh, New Delhi, Manohar, Reprint 2015, p. 247.
16. Hira Moni Deka, *Politics of Identity and the Bodo Movement*, New Delhi, Scholars World, 2014, p. 31.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case of Bodo Kacharis of Assam*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1996, p. 74.
22. *Ibid.*
23. S. Brahma Chaudhury, "On Udayachal Movement", in K.S. Singh ed. *Tribal Movement in India*, Vol. I, Delhi, Manohar, 1982, pp. 106-107 (Quoted by H. M. Deka in *Politics of Identity and the Bodo Movement in Assam*, pp. 29-30)
24. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op.cit.* pp. 74-75.
25. *Ibid.*
26. A.C. Bhuyan, et al (Ed.), *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II, Dispur, Gauhati, Govt. of Assam, 1978, pp. 120-27, 370; see also B.K. Basumatary (Ed.), *Plains Tribals Before the Simon commission* (Harisinga, Darrang, now Udalguri District: The Beacons, Undated)
27. P.S. Datta, *Autonomy Movements in Assam* (Documents), Edition-I, New Delhi, Omsons, 1993, p. 9.
28. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, p. 30.
29. *Memorandum to the Simon Commission by Bodo Community*, Goalpara District, 1929.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
33. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

34. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
35. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, p. 30.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
37. Ajay Roy, *op.cit.* p. 57.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Political History of Assam, Volume III*, Guwahati, Publication Board Assam, Govt. of Assam, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1999, p. 311.
40. Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, *The Bodo Movement and Women's Participation*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2004, p. 57.
41. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.
44. Hira Moni Deka., *op.cit.* pp. 30.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Political History of Assam, Volume III, op. cit.*, p. 312.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 316-17
50. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
51. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, p.125.
54. *Ibid.*
55. M.C. Paul, *Dimension of Tribal Movements in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley*, Inter-India, New Delhi, 1989, p.70.
56. *Ibid.*, 71-72.

57. Achintya Bhattacharyya, "The Plains Tribal Movement in Assam" in *People's Democracy*, June 23, 1968, p. 11. (Quoted by M.C. Paul in *Dimension of Tribal Movements in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley*, p. 72.)
58. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
59. A. Bhattacharyya, "The Tribal Question Again", *People's Democracy*, June 9, 1968, p. 3. (Quoted by M.C. Paul in *Dimension of Tribal Movements in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley*, p. 72.)
60. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
61. Dr. Muktikanta Tripathy, "The Bodo Movement in Assam" in Asish Kumar Das ed. *Contemporary Issues and Social Movements in India*, New Delhi, Sarup Book, 2009, p. 118.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-19.
64. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
65. *Ibid.*
66. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-59.
67. Dr. Muktikanta Tripathy, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
68. M.S. Prabhakar, "The Politics of Scripts", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21 December, 1974 (Quoted by D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, in "Contemporary Cultural and Political Movements among the Bodos of Assam" in K. S. Singh ed. *Tribal Movements in India Vol- 1*, p. 259).
69. *Ibid.*
70. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
71. *Ibid.*
72. Kanakeswar Narzary, Roman Script and Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Kokrajhar: Roman Script Implementation Expert Committee of BSS, 1993, pp. 1-38.
73. Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
74. R.N. Mosahary, "Bodo Sahitya Sabha: A Brief Historical Survey" in *Proceedings of the North East India History Association*, 14(14), 1993, pp. 340-347.

75. Satyendra Nath Mondal, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, ed. Bonny Narzary, Satali Mondol Para, Jalpaiguri, WB, 2011, P.123.
76. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
77. Yogendra Nath Basumatary, "Boro Sahitya Sabhani Nwjwr Arw Thangkhi": The Mission of Bodo Sahitya Sabha: Souvenir, 38<sup>th</sup> Bongaigaon Annual Session of All Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Bongaigaon, p. 5. (Quoted by Binoy Kumar Brahma in *Social Mobility: From Tribalism to Indianism: The Bodos: The Aboriginal People of Eastern India*, Kokrajhar, p. 249).
78. *Ibid.*
79. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, pp. 35.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
81. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p.58.
82. *Ibid.*
83. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
85. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *op.cit.* pp. 249-250.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
87. K.S. Singh (ed.), *The Schedule Tribes*, Vol. 3, New Delhi, OUP, 1994, No. 37, p. 262.
88. Yogendra Nath Basumatary, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
89. *Ibid.*
90. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
91. *Ibid.*
92. P.S. Datta, *op.cit.* pp. 130-131. "PTCA Memorandum to the President of India, May 20, 1967, Appendix 'G', Kokrajhar".
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.
94. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *op. cit.*, p. 250.
95. *Ibid.*



96. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
97. *Ibid.*
98. K.S. Singh (ed.), 1994, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.
99. Yogendra Basumatary, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-52.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, p.8.
102. K.S. Singh (ed.), 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
103. *Ibid.*
104. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*
107. B.K. Daimari, *Proceedings of the NEIHA*, 5<sup>th</sup> Session, Aizawl, 1984, p. 206.
108. Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
109. Kanakeswar Narzary, *Roman (English) Script and Boro Sahitya Sabha*, Kokrajhar: Roman Script Implementation Expert Committee of BSS, 1993, pp.7-17.
110. *Ibid.*, p.32.
111. *Ibid.*, p.63.
112. Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
113. K.S. Singh (ed.), 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
114. Hiren Gohain, "Bodo Stir in Perspective" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 June, 1989, pp. 1377-1379.
115. K.S. Singh (ed.), 1994, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270.
116. Circular Issued by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Dated 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1974.
117. B.K. Daimary, *op. cit.*, p.212.
118. Noas Swargiary, "The Bodo Mass Movement since Independence" in *The Bodos: Children of Bhullumbutter* ed. by Thomas Pulloppillil & Jacob Aluckal, Guwahati, Spectrum, 1997, p. 87.

119. Kanakeswar Narzary, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
120. *A Memorandum to the Three Member Expert Committee on Bodo Issues* by ABSU & BPAC, 8 April, 1991, Kokrajhar, p. 74.
121. Kanakeswar Narzary, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
122. PTCA Memorandum to the President of India, Kokrajhar, 20 May, 1967, pp. 270-271. (Quoted by C. Bhattacharjee in *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case of Bodo Kacharis of Assam*, p. 103).
123. *Ibid.*
124. Satyendra Nath Mondal, *op. cit.*, p.125.
125. Noas Swargiary, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
126. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
127. Achintya Bhattacharyya, "The Plains Tribal Movement in Assam", *op. cit.*, p. 76.
128. A. Bhattacharyya, "The Tribal Question Again", *op. cit.*, p. 76.
129. Dhebar Commission Report, New Delhi, Chapter 11, Para 56, p.118.
130. *Ibid.*, Chapter 11, Para 45.
131. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, p. 61. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-33.
132. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-33.
133. Hamza Alavi, "Imperialism: Old and New", in *The Socialist Register*, 1954, pp. 104-26 (Quoted by M.C. Paul in *Dimension of Tribal Movements in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley*, p. 77).
134. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
135. *Ibid.*
136. C. Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
137. J.K. Basumatary, 'PTCA, Janmar Patabhumi' (Assamese) in a Souvenir released on the occasion of the first General Session at Harisinga, 1970 (Quoted by D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee in *Tribal Movements in India*, Vol. 1, ed. by K.S. Singh, p. 264).
138. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.
139. *Ibid.*

140. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
141. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
142. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-66.
143. *Ibid.*
144. Samar Brahma Chaudhury, "On Udayachal Movement" in B.C. Bhuyan (ed.), *Political Development in the North-East*, New Delhi, Omsons, 1989, p. 115.
145. *A Memorandum to the Three Member Expert Committee on Bodo Issues* by ABSU and BPAC, 8 April, 1991, Kokrajhar, p. 75.
146. L.S. Gassah (ed.), *Regional Political Parties in North-East*, New Delhi, Omsons, 1992, p. 84.
147. Samar Brahma Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
148. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 266.
149. *Ibid.*
150. Samar Brahma Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
151. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
152. Shekhar Gupta, *Assam: A Valley Divided*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1984, p. 114.
153. D. P. Mukherjee & S.K. Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
155. Samar Brahma Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
156. *Ibid.*
157. B.C. Bhuyan (ed.), *Political Development of the North- East*, New Delhi, Omsons, 1989, p. 116.
158. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, p. 63.
159. *Ibid.*
160. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
161. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
162. Ajay Roy, *op.cit.* p. 61.

163. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, pp.105.
164. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
165. Memorandum to Prakash Mehrotra, Governor of Assam, dated 16 January 1982, p. 5.
166. *Why Separate State of Bodoland: Demand and Justification* (Published by ABSU, Kokrajhar, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998) p. 25.
167. *Ibid.*
168. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
169. Noas Swargiary, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
170. Interview with Sonaram Baglary, Son of Lt. Kuruna Kanta Baglary, Age- 58, Designation- Associate Professor & Ex. Chairman, Volunteer Force, ABSU, Vill.- Katribari, P.O.- Saraibil, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 14/04/2016.
171. S. Pathak, *Bodoland*, Tihu Gaya Prakashan, Guwahati. 1995, p.99.
172. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
173. *Why Separate State*, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26.
174. *Ibid.*
175. C. Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, pp.105-106.
176. Memorandum to Sri Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India by ABSU, 22 January, 1987.
177. DR. Oinam Ranjit Singh & Gautam Mushahary, *Examining on the Genesis of Bodoland Movement: An Empirical Study*, Asian Academic Research Journal of Multidisciplinary, AARJMD, Vol. 4, Issue 10, October, 2017, p. 42.
178. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 17 June, 1987.
179. Interview with Bijitgra Narzary, S/O Dukuram Narzary, Age- 48, Designation- Ex. Vice President, KDC/ABSU, CWC Member, ABSU & Ex. Activist, ABSU Volunteer Force, Vill.- Batabari, P.O.- Simbargaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 25/01/2017.
180. Interview with Gobinda Basumatary, S/O Jaymal Basumatary, Age, 45, Designation- Ex. CWC Member & activist of Volunteer Force, ABSU, Vill. Pundibai, P.O.- Nayekgaon, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 29/08/2016.
181. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 17 June, 1987, *op. cit.*,

182. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 24 June 1987.
183. *Ibid.*
184. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 7 July 1987.
185. *Ibid.*
186. *Memorandum to the Three-Member Expert Committee* by ABSU & BPAC, 8 April 1991, pp. 66-67 ; S. Pathak, *op.cit.*, p.21.
187. Interview with Sanjit Kumar Brahma, S/O Lt. Khitish Chandra Brahma, Age- 45, Designation- Ex. CWC Member & Sports Secretary, All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), Vill.- Fakiragram, P.O. & P.S.- Fakiragram, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam- 783345 on 23/01/2017.
188. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 28 November 1987.
189. *Ibid.*
190. *Ibid.*
191. Interview with Tikendra Basumatary, S/O Lt. Karendra Basumatary, Age-55, Designation- Ex-Treasurer & Central Working Committee Member, ABSU, Vill.- Goladangi No. 2, P.O.- Golandangi No. 2, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 26/06/2017.
192. *Memorandum to the Three-Member Expert Committee*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 62.
193. *Ibid.*
194. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 15 December 1988.
195. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 11 January 1988; S. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p.21.
196. S. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p.21.
197. *Why Separate State*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
198. *Ibid.*
199. Interview with Pranju Bala Brahma, D/O- Nandeswar Brahma, Age, 46, Designation- Ex. CWC Member, ABWWF and Ex. General Secretary, DAC, ABWWF, Vill.\_Inthibil, P.O.- Laodonga, P.S. Dotma, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 21/09/2016.
200. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 21 April 1988.

201. *Ibid.*
202. Interview with Suniram Basumatary, S/O Lt. Upendra Basumatary, Age- 56, Designation- Ex-Vice President of ABSU, Vill.- Goybari, P.O.- Ranchaidham, Dist.- Chirang, BTAD, Assam-783372 on 25/12/2016.
203. *The Telegraph*, 24 May, 1988.
204. *Ibid.*
205. *Memorandum to the Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi* by UTNLF, New Delhi, 3 May 1988.
206. *ABSU Press Release*, 5 May 1988.
207. *Ibid.*
208. *AATWWF Press Release*, 17 May 1988.
209. Interview with Bhabani Narzary, D/O Lt. Dimbeswar Narzary, Age- 55, Designation- Former Convener of Ad-hoc Committee for formation of All Bodo Women Welfare Federation (ABWWF), Joint Secretary, ABWWF & Debating Secretary, Kokrajhar Dist. Committee ABSU, Vill.- Ramfalbil Bazar, P.O.- Ramfalbil, Dist.- Kokrajhar, BTAD, Assam on 16/09/2017.
210. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 3 June 1988.
211. *ABSU Handout*, Kokrajhar, 1 August 1988; and *ABSU Press Release*, 10 August 1988.
212. Interview with Madan M. Mushahary, S/O Jadab S. Mushahary, Age-54, Designation- Ex. Vice President, ABSU, Vill.- Jhargaon, P.O.- Paschim Jhargaon, Dist.- Baksa, BTAD, Assam on 18/09/2017.
213. *Joint Press Release of ABSU, ACKSA & AAMSU*, Shillong, 29 August 1988.
214. *ABSU Press Release*, 7 October 1988.
215. *ABSU Press Release*, 7 and 10 October 1988.
216. *Souvenir, 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of ABSU*, Bashbari, 1988, pp. 120-21.
217. *Memorandum to the Three-Member Expert Committee*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
218. *ABSU Press Release*, Guwahati, 27 December 1988.
219. *BPAC handout*, 1 January 1989.

220. Press Release, Resolutions of the meetings of Tribal Organizations held on 16-17 January 1989, Guwahati, 18 January 1989.
221. *Memorandum to the Governor of Assam and Meghalaya* by UBNLF, Shillong, 20 January 1989.
222. *ABSU Press Release*, 26 January 1989.
223. S. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p.27.
224. Letter to the Union Home Minister by Bhriku Kumar Phukan, Home Minister, Assam, Guwahati, 18 February 1989, (Quoted by C. Bhattacharjee in *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement*, p.125)
225. *ABSU Press Release*, 7 March 1989.
226. S. Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
227. *ABSU Press Release*, 21 March 1989.
228. *ABSU Press Release*, Guwahati, 13 April 1989.
229. *A letter to P.K. Daimari from B.K. Phukan*, Guwahati, 18 April 1989.
230. *ABSU Press Release*, Guwahati, 25 April 1989.
231. *ABSU Press Release*, Guwahati, 1 July 1989.
232. *The Assam Tribune*, 2 September 1989.
233. *The Assam Tribune*, 27 May 1989.
234. R.N. Mosahary, "The Tripartite Bodo Talks: Circumstances, Proceedings and Observation", NEIHA proceedings, 11<sup>th</sup> Session, Imphal, 1990, p. 316.
235. *The Sentinel*, 6 April 1989.
236. R.N. Mosahari, *op. cit.*, p. 317.
237. *Ibid.*
238. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
239. Minutes of Discussion dtd. 5 October 1989 signed by P.K Mahanta, Dr.Rajendra Kumari Bajpai and Upendra Nath Brahma.
240. *Ibid.*
241. *ABSU Press Release*, Guwahati, 11 November 1989.

242. *The Assam Tribune*, 3 November 1989; *Natun Dainik*, 3 November 1989.
243. *The Assam Tribune*, 11 January 1990.
244. Proceedings of the Third Round of Tripartite Talks, dtd 11 January 1990 signed by Ram Vilash Paswan, P. K. Mahanta and Upendra Nath Brahma.
245. Resolution of the Tripartite Talks dtd. 13 September 1990; R.N. Mosahari, *op. cit.*, p. 322-23.
246. *The Sentinel*, 4 October 1990.
247. *The Times of India*, 29 November 1990.
248. *The North East Times*, 19 February 1991.
249. *Memorandum to the 3- Member Expert Committee on the Bodo issue*, submitted by the ABSU- BPAC, Kokrajhar, 8 April 1991, p.5.
250. James Clad, "The Endless Spirit of Unrest" in *Eastern Panorama*, August 1992, Shillong, p. 37. (Quoted by C. Bhattacharjee in *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement*, p.134)
251. *The Assam Tribune*, 14 April 1992.
252. *The Sentinel*, 30 June 1992.
253. *The North-East Times*, 2 July 1992.
254. *The North- East Times*, 24 November 1992.
255. Sansuma Khungur Bwismutiary, Rabiram Brahma and Subhas Basumatary on behalf of ABSU- BPAC, K. S. Rao, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam signed the Accord in presence of the Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Rajesh Pilot.
256. *Bodoland Movement 1986-2001-A Dream and Reality*, Kokrajhar, Published by ABSU, 2001, p. XIII.
257. *The Assam Tribune*, 4 March 1996.
258. *Ibid.*
259. *Ibid.*
260. *The Assam Tribune*, 22 April 1996.



261. Bodoland Movement 1986-2001-A Dream and Reality, *op. cit.*, p. XIII.
262. *Ibid.*
263. *The Assam Tribune*, 16 December 1998.
264. Mugani Sakhi, ABSU Mouthpiece, 1999, 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, Dotoma, Kokrajhar.  
See also *Bodoland Movement 1986-2001-A Dream and Reality*, p. XV.
265. *The Assam Tribune*, 11 February 1998.
266. *Ibid.*
267. *Ibid.*
268. *The Assam Tribune*, 10 February 2003.
269. *The Assam Tribune*, 19 August 2003.