

## CHAPTER - III

### ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND OF BODO MOVEMENTS

The Tibeto-Burman people are predominant in whole North-Eastern region. The Bodos are one of the sections of the Tibeto-Burman family who are considered as one of the earliest settlers in Assam.<sup>1</sup> It is without any doubt that the Bodo tribe racially belong to the Mongoloid stock or the direct descendants of the Mongoloid race. They form a subsection of the Bodo-Naga section under Assam-Burma, a group of Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family.<sup>2</sup> They are considered a very important ethnic community not only of Assam but also the entire North-Eastern states being the single largest group among all the tribals of the plains of Assam.

The genesis of socio-political consciousness and identity articulation among the Bodos may be traced back to the socio-economic and religious reformation movement initiated by Kalicharan Brahma in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the ancient and medieval period and up till the annexation of Kachari kingdom by the British in 1932,<sup>3</sup> they had been playing an important role in the political, cultural and socio-economic spheres of north east India as evident by the existence of their several kingdoms in different periods. It is considered now that the most important group of tribes of the Tibeto-Burman race known as Bodo forms the numerous and important section of the non-Aryan peoples of Assam. The Bodo group of tribes includes the Koc, the Kachari, the Lalung, the Dimacha, the Garo, the Rabha, the Tipra, the Chutiya, the Maran etc.<sup>4</sup> The Bodos built strong kingdoms and with various fortunes and under various tribal names-the Chutiya, the Kachari, the Koc, etc., held sway over one or another part of Assam during different historical times.<sup>5</sup> It is more or less certain that with the exception of the isolated Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the whole of Assam (barring the eastern parts inhabited by the Nagas and the south-eastern parts inhabited by the Kuki-Chins) and

North and East Bengal was the country of the great Bodo people.<sup>6</sup> The Kacharis may perhaps be described as the aborigines, or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley.<sup>7</sup> The western section of the old Bodo (Kacharis) occupied the thrones of Koch Behar, Bijni, Darrang and Beltola. An eastern branch in the name of Chutiya also established a powerful kingdom with its capital near Sadiya and then a section of eastern Bodos maintained their kingdom with capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur in the face of continuous invasions of the Ahoms and neighbouring powers till the advent of the British rule in Assam. This section of Bodos is known to us as Dimasas or Dimasa Kachari (hill Kacharis).<sup>8</sup> The last migration of Bodo king from Maibong (North Cachar Hills) to Khaspur (North-Cachar) made Cachar Valley the ultimate seat of Bodo royal power. Eventually, the kingdom disintegrated beyond repair under the regime of Govinda Chandra Narayan into two parts: one under Govinda Chandra and the other comprising Northern and Central portion of the kingdom was taken over by Tularam Senapati with the help of British intervention. Govinda Chandra was murdered on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1830.<sup>9</sup> Following which his kingdom was temporarily placed under Lieutenant Fisher, who was entrusted with the power of a Magistrate and a Collector. Finally on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1832, the Governor General-in-Council annexed the plains of the Bodo kingdom of Cachar to the British dominion. Tularam Senapati who had been allowed to retain his dominion was pensioned off in 1854 and his dominion annexed to the paramount power.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, there is no denying by the historians about the fact that the Bodos held sway over a large areas in the Brahmaputra valley and beyond.

Over an extensive period of centuries spanning from ancient times to till the advent of colonial rule in the Brahmaputra valley the Bodos had split up into many a groups and sub-groups and scattered over in a vast area of territory beyond inter-state as well as even across international boundary of present day Indian union of states like Bangladesh and Nepal. So it is obvious that they had gone through a several stages of transformations owing to their contact, association and intimate social relationship like inter-caste marriages with the other neighbouring communities. There are some Bodo groups like Tripuri and the Koch who have undergone more radical changes than the Bodos of the northern bank of Brahmaputra in Assam plains. Even there are some Bodo tribes like Koch and Sonowal who have entirely forgotten their original tradition, custom and language due to their intimate and long association with neighbouring non-mongoloid people. Some of the Bodo tribes like Tripuri, while the ruling elite class has totally taken to Bengali language and culture, the common Tripuri folks have still

retained their original language (Kok-borok) and culture. Nevertheless, there is one group which has undergone only a little amount of change is the Bodo Kacharis or Boro Kacharis who are living now on the northern bank of Brahmaputra, with scattered populations in other parts of the state of Assam.

### **Socio-Economic basis of the Bodo Movements:**

#### **Social Circumstances:**

As the Bodos were gradually approaching the modern age, they failed to face the challenges mainly because of their tribal insularity and the poor economic structure of their society. The economic vitality that they had displayed during their heyday in the medieval period could not be sustained by them when they faced the challenges of the modern age and being afraid of the challenge they coiled back inside their tribal cocoon and were thus left behind by their more adventurous neighbours. In fact that had been the case with most other tribal societies in the north-east. It was only the Assamese people, who were mostly descendents of the earlier Aryan settlers, who faced the challenge boldly and thus surged ahead in the modern age.<sup>11</sup>

The non-tribal Assamese people and the Tribal people of Assam had been living in close proximity since the very distant past. There also had always been regular interaction between the people of plains and the hills through the passes and river routes for reasons of economic and others even though natural barriers have separated the tribes of both the regions. The plain tribes like the Bodos over long centuries of fusion and inter-mingling had been living in different groups amidst the Assamese society spread all over the Brahmaputra valley. As Bodos had been the most numerous among all the tribes of Assam plains, their present existence as a distinct tribe in the region still bear much significance with regards to socio-economic and political changing processes and developments. Fairly a large chunk of them converted to Hinduism and assimilated with the Assamese society, yet, majority of them remained as distinct tribes having their own languages, cultures, customs, traditions etc. and maintained cordial relationship with their Assamese neighbours over the ages. There had been thus a stream of racial, linguistic and cultural interaction and assimilation process running through the periods of history between the tribals and non-tribals of Assam. S.K. Bhuyan is of the opinion that the vocabulary of the Assamese language was greatly strengthened by words used by the tribals. Assamese proverbs were brimful of references to the customs of our tribal neighbours. The popular music and dance of Assam has been largely reinforced by

borrowings from the tribals. Weaving which was universal amongst women in Assam also to be found amongst a large section of the tribal population. The liberal spirit of the Assamese Vaishnava monks has led to the conversion of a large number of tribals with the Hindu fold and they have become as ardent devotees of Hinduism as their older co-religionists.<sup>12</sup> Hinduisation of the tribes of the North-East region began with the migration of the Aryans to these parts of the region which is commonly known as Sanskritisation. The exact time of the arrival of the Aryans in this part of the country remains obscure.<sup>13</sup> The names of the royal families were Sanskritised. The places and rivers were also given Sanskrit names and simultaneously the process of Aryanisation of indigenous population of this region continued.<sup>14</sup> Aryan influence over the Bodos remained confined mostly to the Bodo royalty. Although the process of Hinduization continued till the advent of British in Assam, the masses remained untouched. No attempt was made before the *ek saran* dharma of Sri Sankardev to draw the masses into the pale of Hinduism.<sup>15</sup> But regardless of all these transformations within the tribal societies, they retained some of their tribal traits, such as, language, culture, religion, etc. which in turn helped them to maintain their ethnic identity.

The early Bodo settlers of Assam had spoken their own dialect. In course of time, the interaction, assimilation and integration of various cultures, religions, races and civilizations produced a distinctive synthesis of the valley's culture, economy and polity. As a result, Assamese language developed as a link language among multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-caste, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society of Ahom Assam and its adjacent areas of influences. The Bodo language, along with other tribal languages contributed greatly to the development of Assamese language.<sup>16</sup> The Boros settled in the region much earlier than the Aryans and they settled mostly near streams, rivulets and rivers for facility of living, irrigation as well as movement. Hence it was they who first named these streams and rivers in their own language. In Boro language *Di* or *Doi* means water and that is how most of the streams, rivulets and rivers in the plains of Assam still bear names starting with the prefix *Di* or *Doi*, for example Dihang, Dikhou, Digaroo, Doifang, Doimukh etc. and many identical place names on their banks. That these names not changed or altered later by the Aryan settlers following the Boros, should speak of the dominant influence of the Boros in Assam that even the all conquering Aryans accepted. Even other place names not associated with rivers have also Boro origin. For example the name *Hajo* in Kamrup (now Nalbari) district is derived from the word *Hajou*, a Boro word meaning hillock. In the other direction we find that

spoken Boro has now many Assamese words either unaltered or altered or modified to suit Boro phonetics.<sup>17</sup>

The Bodos generally lived in communal villages while they were also found settling in mixed villages throughout Assam. The Bodos practiced the patriarchal system of descent and inheritance. A family member was identified by the surname which follows the line from father to children. In patriarchy, father in a family was regarded as the final decision-maker. He was also the sole owner of all the family property and from him the property was inherited by his sons only. Joint family was the commonest type of family that existed in age-old traditional Bodo society though the possibility of the practice of other type of family could not be rule out altogether. In joint family system, the parents lived with their married sons and their children. The sons were responsible to look-after their parents. All of them lived together under the same roof and share the same kitchen. It is mostly joint or extended. The boys did not usually take a separate house after marriage. Separation was done by the head of the family according to necessity.<sup>18</sup> Daughters, married or unmarried, have no right to the property. Widowed mother and unmarried daughters get their maintenance. Sons had a duty in this respect.<sup>19</sup>

The only socio-political institution in the Bodo villages had been the Village Council headed by the *Gaonbura* (village headman) and all the elder members of the village who exercised supreme commands and decisions concerning every matters of the village. *Gaonbura* played vital role in the functioning of day to day activities of the village relating to community works and other matters of the village such as convening meetings, arranging ritual activities, resolving disputes, organizing customary events such as marriages etc. where wise or enlightened members of the council also equally counted to be important decision makers who were mostly men of character and having clean social status, and therefore, their decisions and judgments were mostly binding and ultimate. The office of the *Gaonbura* was not hereditary. In all probability, he was being selected by the council of members and the possibility of election also in few cases could not be totally rule out.

Though the Bodo people led a very simple, pious and honest life characterized by high moral values such as truthfulness, straight-forwardness, trustworthiness etc. in the recent past, but with the passage of time, things somewhat changed bringing new complexities unknown or unheard before. The improvements of communication, general mobility and intercourse with the people all around brought some psychological and

attitudinal change of all sections of people. To meet these changing situations of life, necessity appeared to frame some local laws on the basis of customs and traditions as prevailing in the society. Thus the locally codified customary usages and practices of the Boro societies came to be followed after approval from the zonal council composed of adjacent villages. These local laws are known as *Pandulipis* as they were in manuscripts and hardly printed. Since they were not co-ordinated homogenous sets of laws, they differ in content and application from area to area. However, the basic issues pertaining to inheritance of property, succession to office of socio-religious and socio-political nature and liability of atonement on committing unnatural and unsocial offences were more or less identical.<sup>20</sup>

Changes were apparent in the socio-cultural milieu of the plain tribes of Assam including the Bodos in the field of religion, economy or livelihood pattern, social status, custom and tradition etc. due to close contact and cordial relationship with the non-tribal Hindu Assamese society as well as due to the British occupation of the valley. By the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Bodos and some of the tribes of the northeast were converted into Hinduism, Christianity and even to Islam. The British rule also played significant role along with their agents and missionaries in bringing about changes in every spheres of life of the people of northeast India. The new regime brought about modern means of education, developments in the field of communications, new code of laws and new knowledge of western political systems, new economic patterns etc. which were greatly responsible for the changes in socio-economic, political and cultural life of the people of Assam plains. The plains tribals who were living in proximity with the Hindu Assamese society equally influenced by Hindu social, economic and religious practices even if they were not compelled to conversion. Mention may be made of changes from *Jhum* or shifting to plough cultivation which they learned from the neighbouring caste Hindu cultivators; especially the Bodo Kachari tribe of the Assam-Bengal border adopted a settled agricultural life instead of shifting hoe cultivation that was age-old practice of them. Likewise, one more example of the socio-economic change of the tribes like the Koch of western and south-western borders of the Garo Hills may be mentioned here. The Koch tribe of these areas was permanent cultivators and practiced shifting cultivation also and was basically organized on the basis of matrilineal clans known as *nikini*. The interesting feature of Koch social structure is that it represents a stage of transition from the norms of a matrilineal-biased society to that of a patrilineally-biased society. This was due to their attempt to elevate themselves on the social ladder by

gradual adoption of Hindu practices and due to their shift from a *jhum* (slash-and-burn) economy to permanent agriculture.<sup>21</sup>

During the Ahom period the Bodos had come under the renewed Hindu influence and gradually this influence increased over the whole of kingdom so much so that along with the king even the subjects also adopted Hindu names and began worship Hindu gods and deities. As the Ahom rulers too very soon succumbed to Hinduism forgetting gradually their own tradition and culture, they started patronizing Hinduism vigorously from the time of Sudangpha (1397-1407) and the Brahmanas came to have a great influence in the Ahom court, and with it gradual, complete Hinduisation of the Ahom started. The Hinduisation of Ahoms, at first in culture and religion and then in language, commenced with great vigour in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; by 1750 it was almost complete.<sup>22</sup> When Ahoms entered Assam, they were few in number and most of them were males. They, therefore, married the local women and many Kachari women must had been their wives also who were then, by rule, Hinduised. Moreover, the rapid growth of Hinduisation was also due to the defeat faced by the Kacharis at the hands of the Ahoms and some of them had to flee the country. They took shelter in remote jungles and hills while some others decided to remain in the hands of the Ahoms who were then converted to Hinduism later on in gradual process.

The Koches, a section of the great Bodo group settled in West Bengal, was influenced greatly by the Aryan culture in the sixteenth century. Therefore, in the passage of time, they forgot their own tradition of language, religion and culture and developed a different culture which followed the line of Bengali culture. During the initial stage of conversion they were known by the name of *Saraniya Koch*. After passing through all the Hindu ritual purification, they were honoured with the status of using sacred thread and thus attained the status of *Koch* caste within Hindu milieu, now known as *Koch-Rajbongshi*.<sup>23</sup>

The last part of the Bodo-Kachari kingdom was more significant with so much influence of Hinduism with Bengali language and literature. King Gopichandra Narayana established the Bengali Brahmin family within his kingdom and granted them land. The members of the royal family and all those Bodos (now called Barmans) who settled in the Cachar valley had adopted Bengali language. The land grants, appointment of officials, correspondence, statutes and ordinances were all made in Bengali. The last two kings of Cachar, Krishnachandra and Govindachandra were known for their contribution to

Bengali literature. These inclinations of the royal house and the subjects towards the outside influence had adverse effect on the maintenance of the traditional nature of their administrative system, language, culture and their society.<sup>24</sup> The age-old practices of the plain tribes began to be gradually transformed and they started associating themselves with the Hindu thoughts and practices drawing parallel of their deities with Hindu gods and goddesses, such as the principal male and female deities of the Bodos *Bathou* or *Sibray* and *Mainao Buri* began to be identified with God Shiva and Goddess Lakshmi of the Hindus respectively.<sup>25</sup> In addition to all these Aryanisation processes, a vital role was also played by the Sankaradeva's preaching of Vaisnavism which brought about a major change in the spheres of religion, culture and social life of the different tribes of Brahmaputra valley converting and absorbing large number of tribal masses through *saran* ritual ceremonies within the Hindu fold of Neo-Vaisnavite religion. While going through the stages of Hinduisation process, the tribal novices were required or most desirable to refrain from the un-Hindu habits such as eating of beef, pork and fowl. It was also necessary for them to give up the entire fundamental roots of tribal customs and traditions such as matrilineal inheritance, clan oriented kinship relations and adopt Hindu rites, and the most important criteria for complete recognition of the tribals into the Hindu fold was that when they totally forsaken their original language and adopted the Aryan language which was Assamese in Assam valley. So, most visibly it was certain that the process of sanskritisation has brought about a major change in the socio-economic, polity and cultural life of the tribal people of the Brahmaputra valley.

Amalendu Guha writes that the Individual and groups moved not only from animism to vaishnavism, but also from tribes to peasant castes, from pile houses to mud-plinth houses, from burial practice to cremation of the dead, from liberal food habits to abstinence from liquor, beef and pork, from shifting to permanent cultivation, and so on.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the tribes like *Sarania Kacharis*, *Sonowal Kacharis*, *Lalungs (Tiwa)* etc. have become Hinduised through assimilation processes and adopted Assamese language, religion and culture abandoning their own original tribal traits. S. Endle<sup>27</sup> claimed that apart from these outlying members of the race, there were within the limits of Assam itself at least 1,000,000 souls, probably many more who belonged to the Kachari race, though many of the number have of late years become more or less Hinduised and have lost the use of their mother language.



A section of the Bodos continued to maintain their distinct identity because they were apprehensive of losing their primitives roots, i.e. language, religion, customs, etc. and moreover, they were also not satisfied with the low status assigned to them even though they were converted to Hinduism. No doubt, Bodos had a great contribution in the growth of the composite Assamese society and in the formation of Assamese language, culture and society. At the same time the Bodos also adopted the neighbouring language, culture, dress and religion. For the reason, there emerged differences among the Bodos living in different parts of the Northeast India, in terms of their varied forms of cultural identity. With the annexation of Bodo kingdom by the British, the Bodos lost their political existence and sovereignty. They became completely disarranged during the British rule. Due to the lack of education and underdeveloped traditional economic system, the Bodos remained backward in the composite Assamese society. As a result, they could not occupy any prominent place in the state bureaucracy. Important positions were held either by the outsiders or the Assamese Caste-Hindu elite who were of Aryan origin. It made them more backward economically and politically. Like economic and political spheres, the Bodos remained backward in social sphere also. In the Assamese society they failed to earn social respectability. The life-style of the Bodos was different from the advanced section of the Assamese Hindus. They used rice-beer, sacrificed birds and animals, reared pigs and so on for they were looked down upon by high caste neighbouring Hindus. They could not occupy equal status in the Caste-Hindu dominated Assamese society. Later on, the bulk of the Bodo people of the different parts of Northeast India had converted to Hinduism in view of getting social respectability or equal status in the society, leaving their language, culture, dress, religion and so on.<sup>28</sup>

It is significant to note that the Bodos could not occupy social respectability even after their conversion to Hinduism, as they could not dine with them and the Hindus did not receive them into their society. The students of the Bodo community were not allowed to mess together with those of the Hindus. They were Hindu only in name. They remained as low class citizens of the state.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the Bodos could not shut themselves out of the cultural configuration that prevailed during the British rule. Besides Vaishnavism, Christianity also influenced the Bodos and many of the Bodo people converted to Christian religion. However, most of the converted Christian that are found in the Bodo society maintained simultaneously their original culture too. Even in the early part of the twentieth century a new wave of conversion had taken place among the Bodos. Kalicharan Mech, a social reformer of the Bodo origin, preached the *Brahma*

*Dharma*, different from the *Bathou* religion among the Bodos.<sup>30</sup> A section of the Bodo population adopted this newly preached religion and changed their traditional title accepting the title *Brahma*. The Bodos were thus, breaking up as a race by getting converted to different religions.

But the British occupation of the Brahmaputra valley brought about a sweeping change in every walk of life of the people of this region. In order to serve their interests as well as to suit their style of administration, the colonial power in the valley introduced a new legal system, new settings of revenue administration and new courts of British Laws. To regulate the civil and criminal procedures in the valley, the British introduced a special set of rules known as the 'Assam Code' in 1837 to tackle the new system of administrations and rules introduced by them. Afterwards the special Assam Code was replaced by the general code of civil and criminal procedure of Bengal in 1860 and the Indian Panel Code was also introduced in the Brahmaputra valley in 1862. A network of police organization with one Daroga, a zamadar and a few constables were maintained in the headquarters for maintenance of law and order. These changes created adverse effects on the tribal societies. The illiterate and economically backward tribals failed to take advantage of the new avenues created by the British administration. The *Khel* system which had been at the core of the societies before the coming of the British collapsed. The village council not only lost its political power but also the civil matters went out of its hands. The civil matters like the question of succession, land rights and disputes became subject matters of the British law courts. As a result the village council lost its power and authority they had been enjoying since long.<sup>31</sup> Further, the Brahmaputra valley witnessed an unprecedented flow of thousands of land hungry immigrants from the different regions of British India due to the opening up of new transport and communication network and most of them were transported by the British officials themselves who in order to engage these immigrants in the newly explored coal, iron and oil mines as well as to employ them in the ever expanding tea plantation areas and industries which created huge demographic imbalance of the valley. The ultimate consequence of this immigrant population was so profoundly damaging and irreparable that even today all the indigenous people of the state, mostly the tribals are immeasurably suffering from the brunt of these outsiders. These flocks of immigrants compelled the tribal people to migrate into the deep jungles abandoning their ancestral lands and habitations.

The spread of Christianity among the Bodos had brought some remarkable changes in their pattern of living, custom, habit, belief and values. It was through Bodo Christian society that some of the western values and culture came among the Bodos, which enabled them to evaluate their own culture and society. It also resulted to the transition of Bodo society from tradition to modernity to some extent.<sup>32</sup> The advent of Christianity with its universal appeal and transforming power to enrich and elevate every culture and language, was an occasion for the Bodos with an open mind to give a new lease of life to their national, cultural and linguistic identity which was being eroded by the cultural invasion of Hinduism.<sup>33</sup> It is rightly said that Christianity brought new life and vitality to the Bodo people. The education that the missionaries imparted had a lot to do with the formation of a national consciousness which helped them to understand their genius and ethos.<sup>34</sup> The activities of missionaries directly or indirectly freed the indigenous people from certain superstitious beliefs and practices. The missionaries established dispensaries and provided medical treatment to the backward people. The Boro converts were taught how to maintain cleanliness, health and hygiene and were encouraged to pursue western education and to become self-reliant. These activities of the Christian missionaries made an impact on the Bodo society as a whole.<sup>35</sup>

The missionary's contribution in the field of education cannot be underestimated. They erected schools and imparted education in backward Bodo areas, when there were hardly any institutions even in the, so called, developing Bodo areas. Although liquor or other intoxicating things were being used by the Christians of some other parts of the North East India, the missionaries prohibited their use in the Bodo Christian society, either at home or in ceremonies. The contribution of the missionaries to the Bodo language and literature is worth-mentioning. They showed a new direction to the already disintegrating Bodo language in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The missionaries penetrated into such interior place where no government's welfare measures had ever reached.<sup>36</sup> Thus, with the spread of education and literacy among the tribes of the Northeast, some of them could join the government jobs as clerks, teacher, soldier in the military department etc. and the situation also helped in the emergence of a elite tribal class with modern outlook. The ethnological studies initiated by the Missionaries also helped in the creation of ethnic consciousness among the tribes. They published series of articles in the *Orunodai*, and some interesting accounts of the Garos, the Miris, and the Nagas, with whom they lived and worked.<sup>37</sup> The Christian Missionaries thus spread

western education and thought which roused the tribesmen from their torpor to assert their rights: political, economic and cultural.<sup>38</sup>

Similar or perhaps more effective contribution towards emancipating the Bodos from the darkness and arousing a common sentiment of Bodo nation building was made by a simple man of extra-ordinary caliber popularly known as Gurudev Kalicharan who brought about a remarkable change with regards to socio-economic, religious and political outlook of the Bodos and paved the way for national awakening among the Bodos. As a matter of fact, for nearly a long one century from 1832 to 1929, the Bodos had disappeared from the socio-political scenario of Assam as an important and influential community. This period is marked by chaos, confusion and disorder in the Bodo society. This state of disarray appeared to be much more acute by the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Referring to these conditions of the Bodos, Dr. Sekhar Brahma writes that on the eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bodo society sunk in the mist of evil, disorder, superstition, backwardness etc. Perhaps it was the darkest period in the History of the Bodo society. There was degradation and degeneration in the socio-economic life of the Bodos.<sup>39</sup> Dr. Kameswar Brahma also observes the Bodos of that period in a same way and says that the Bodo society of 19<sup>th</sup> century was totally backward and looked down upon by the other communities. There was total mess in the domain of religious practices too. Due to lack of education, ignorance prevailed all around. There was no political and economic consciousness. The simple, easygoing, God-fearing and mild-natured Bodos always became the victim of exploitation and cheating by the other advanced communities, especially on the economic field. Certain vices, abuses and malpractices like unscrupulous sacrifices of birds and animals in the name of religion, giving of religious sanctions of brewing and excessive consumption of rice beer, dragging and stealing of girls for marriage, rearing of pigs which make the surroundings dirty and unhealthy etc. have made the Bodos disliked and hated by the high caste Hindu neighbours. These state of affairs continued even after the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under these circumstances, to avoid discrimination and to uplift their social status, many Bodos had changed their surnames and detached themselves from the community. Many of them were converted into Christianity while some of them embraced Ek Saran Nam Dharam propagated by Srimat Sankardev and became Sarania. Even many Bodo people of few villages like Panbari and Alamganj of present Dhubri district were converted to Islam.<sup>40</sup>

Such a miserable and pathetic condition of the Boro society had made Kalicharan Brahma very sad. He deeply realized the need of a thorough reform of the Bodo society. Kalicharan appeared as a messiah of the Bodo Society who realized that the Bodos were needed to be educated and the entire socio-economic and political conditions were required to be transformed and the traditional Bathou religion did not suit for the time. On the other hand, Islam or *Ek Sharan Nam Dharma* would not protect their identity, language and culture. At last he saw a ray of hope in Brahma religion, which would save the Boro society from that critical stage.<sup>41</sup> Brahma came forward with a dream to advance the backward Bodo community. He realized that backwardness leads to suffering. He therefore felt the need to awaken the Bodos from their long slumber. To make them aware of socio-economic aspects, he stressed more and more on education, and he himself was a pioneer in the sphere of education.<sup>42</sup> He launched campaigns for social reforms along with the propagation of Brahma religion and called upon the people to give up the traditional practices of rearing pigs and poultry birds, brewing and consumption of liquor and encouraged trade, business, weaving, carpentry etc. to generate employment to the Bodo youths.<sup>43</sup> In 1912, with government grant of rupees thirty thousand, he opened up Minor and Middle English schools, driving and carpentry schools. He also opened a Brahma Boarding for the convenience of the students studying in Dhubri Government High School. Some of the Boro traders provided free timbers in the construction of the boarding.<sup>44</sup> This boarding, with the passage of time, became the centre of the Bodo intellectuals and their activities. The boarding produced some intellectual Bodos with progressive outlook who, at the same time, faithfully assisted Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma in his mission as well as built their careers both as social workers and as political activists. Some of its members, with the assistance of some Bodo students, went further on to form the Bodo Chatra Sanmela in 1919.<sup>45</sup>

Brahma also took strong initiative of organizing the first ever conference of Boro Mahasammilani at Bhaoraguri under Gossaigaon police Station of the then Goalpara District in 1921 where Jadav Chandra Khakhlary was president and Rupnath Brahma was General Secretary of the organizing committee.<sup>46</sup> Second Boro Mahasammilani was at Rangia in Kamrup District in 1925. The third Mahasammilani was held at Raumari village, little distance away in the north of Bongaigaon in 1929 which was presided over by Jadavchandra Khakhlary. Brahma took the leading part and suggested many measures to reform the germs infected Boro society and helped in the adoption of many effective far-reaching resolutions such as complete ban on consumption of liquor, totally giving up

of rearing of pigs, restricting the Bodo womenfolk from going out unnecessarily to market in swarms, etc.<sup>47</sup> It is clear that Boro Mahasanmilani played a vital role in arousing common sentiments and consciousness among the emerging educated Boro middle class as well as among the students though its impact on common masses was rather less commanding. Yet, Kalicharan Brahma, by that time, had already created a bunch of dedicated and committed enlightened group of social workers who in the immediate future would be leading the Boro community towards certain level of development which had never happened in the history of the Bodos before, and herein lies the crucial contribution of Gurudev Kalicharan for which he and the entire Bodo community could be proud of. Among some of his noted disciples and followers who took the leading part in realizing his aim mentioned may be made to the names of Charan Mandal (Brahma), Jamadar Brahma, Bir Narayan Brahma, Karan Mondol, Malsing Brahma Choudhury, Manbaru Brahma, Dhajendra Nath Brahma, Katimal Brahma, Kalicharan Brahma (Junior), Banti Kumar Brama, Shanan Brahma Babaji, Sabharam Brahma Choudhury, Shyama Charan Brahma, Kartik Chandra Brahma, Rupnath Brahma, Satish Chanra Basumatary, Modaram Brahma ect.<sup>48</sup> The social reform movement initiated by him could be regarded much more higher than the religious propagation of him because his influence and contribution towards emancipating Bodo community as a whole had a greater significance in the context of larger interest of Bodo identity formation. As a result of his untiring efforts, gradually the Bodos became conscious and started to organize themselves.

In the post independent period, the number of educated Bodo youths considerably increased and their level of consciousness became widespread day by day with regards to their individual status as well as realization of their community's dismal condition that was being emotionally perceived as crucial issues by them and therefore they began to closely attached these issues to their thoughts, feelings and psyches ready to face any kind of eventuality to solve them. They became aware of the fact that most of their grievances remained unsolved and the government took only a meager initiative to address their problems which were not at all enough even to a little extent to protect and preserve their identity, culture, language and socio-economic and political interests. As a result, in the post independent period too, the problems of land alienation, poverty, indebtedness, severe unemployment, economic exploitation and cultural and political neglect became increasingly acute among them. The schemes of Tribal Sub-Plan, the Tribal Development Corporation, Tribal Development Authority, Integrated Tribal

Development Project, Welfare of Schedule Tribes and Backward Classes, Tribal Research Institute etc. meant for the development of the tribals measurably failed to protect the interests of tribals of Assam.<sup>49</sup>

The emerging Bodo educated elite rightly or wrongly began to feel that they were being deprived of their *due share* of administrative jobs and other privileges. As such, they remained backward socially, economically and even politically. They still remember their glorious past, as at one time they were a powerful ruling race, with distinct lingo-cultural identity. Moreover, it appears to them that they made immense contribution towards the formation of greater Assamese society. They felt that they deserved much more than what they could achieve. Hence, the Bodo elite realized that in order to alleviate the Bodo people from the backwardness and enable them to lead a respectful life in the composite Assamese society, the Bodos must achieve political power. They must acquire their due share of power in the administrative affairs of the state. For this, the Bodos must be organized on the basis of their distinct lingo-cultural traits which would help them not only in maintaining distinct identity but also bargain with the ruling elite for sharing power with them. In fact, the Bodo elite realized that the maintenance of distinct identity and the all round development of the society is complementary to each other. Therefore, they began asserting their identity since the beginning of the twentieth century. Later on, this identity assertion transformed into a movement.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the Bodos of the Brahmaputra valley gradually became conscious and aware of their miserable social conditions and they began to compare their positions with those of the advanced caste Hindu Assamese neighbours. They came to realize that they were placed in lower strata in the Hindu social milieu even though different measures were being adopted by the government to uplift their overall status. They, therefore, by the beginning of early 20<sup>th</sup> century began to organize themselves to meet the every challenge before them to solve the problems of their community and as a result several local organizations were formed to fight against the social injustice and this process continued in the post independent period where many socio-political and nationalist organizations came up with the sole objective to awaken the Bodos from their long slumber and to liberate them from backwardness, injustice and exploitation as well as for achieving equal rights and privileges as the other developed communities of the country. So, there occurred several socio-political movements among the Bodos led by these Bodo

organizations some of which still leading the movements like the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) spearheading the statehood movement even to these days.

### **Economic Circumstances:**

Self-sufficient village economy was the basic feature of the Bodos of Brahmaputra valley. Agriculture constituted the backbone of their economy. In the days of yore they generally practiced *jhum* cultivation. In the later period plough cultivation had replaced *jhum* cultivation. They cultivated many crops of which rice (*mai*) is the principal one. They not only cultivated rice of different varieties but also cash crops like mustard seed, cotton, sugarcane, vegetables, and seasonal fruits like orange, banana etc. But they were always obsessed with the idea of mono-cropping. They had a firm belief that multi-cropping robbed the land of fertility and they were averse to using any other manure except burnt weeds and cow dung. As their numbers increased, the pressure on land also increased and consequently they failed to increase their agricultural productivity proportionately by adopting to better manure and innovative methods. As they were slow in taking to other avenues of employment opened up by the modern age, and stuck to the only known economic activity i.e. agriculture, their ever-increasing population put them to economic hardship.<sup>51</sup> But it undergone diversification replacing in most cases the traditional one-year one-crop pattern that hitherto prevailed. In this context their indigenous skill in devising irrigational works helped them mush in carrying out the diversified and improved system of agricultural operations. It is noticed that compared to other plains tribal people, they now became more prone to the use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and use of scientific knowledge in agriculture.<sup>52</sup> As the chief pursuit of the people was agriculture, the village site was generally placid along the river banks which made the irrigation easy and raising of crops more secure. In fact, most of the settlements mentioned in the epigraphs were on the banks of river.<sup>53</sup> The Bodos now found to have settled on the vast alluvial plains of the northern bank of river Brahmaputra. This community was, however, famous for its migratory habits. For a Bodo necessary preconditions for their permanent settlement were a high land to construct the house, vast grazing field, cultivable land, availability of rivers/ponds/rivulets or lakes, forests in nearby areas for collecting firewood, leafy vegetables, animals to hunt, etc.<sup>54</sup>

The Bodos of the Brahmaputra valley had acquired a peculiar form of irrigation system in their surrounding villages for undertaking agricultural activities. S. Endle<sup>55</sup>



remarked that the people were especially skilful in the construction of irrigation canals and earthwork embankments for diverting water from river-beds into their rice-fields and their efforts in this direction were very largely aided by their closely clannish organization. Whenever the rainfall threatens to be below the average, the village headman with his associated elders fixes on the spot whence water was to be brought from the nearest river to the rice-fields. At the spot very rude and primitive shelters of jungle grass, etc., were put up and here all the manhood strength of the village, each man armed with hoe, dao, etc., were compelled to take up their abode until the necessary work has been fully carried out. In this way it will be obvious that the Kacharis have a highly efficient and very inexpensive Public Works Department of their own and vigorous efforts of self-help of this character would seem to be worthy of high commendation and hearty support.

The Brahmaputra valley was endowed with abundant natural wealth and forest products, the tribals of Assam were also largely dependent on forest for the purpose of alternative living through forest resources everyday and whenever their crops failed to meet up their livelihood, the forest resources such as firewood, medicinal herbs, leafy vegetables, fruits, tubers, housing materials, hunting etc. provided alternate source and backup for their living.

Besides agricultural operation another related economic activity in which the Bodos had a natural propensity was animal husbandry, particularly rearing of pigs and fowl. But seldom did they take to it for commercial purposes i.e. selling in the market on any large scale. Another economic activity in which the Bodos, mainly their womenfolk, engaged was the rearing of a kind of silk-worm on castor-seed plant leaves and drawing silk threads from their cocoons. The silk thread, known as *endi* (pronounced as eri with a hard r), is then woven by them in their hand-looms to produce warm wrappers which have had always a very good market not only in Assam but also outside. Besides this *endi* product the Bodo women also woven various types of cotton cloths on their hand-looms both for their own use as well as for the market.<sup>56</sup>

Besides the above mentioned activities, the Bodos also engaged in border trade activities during the ancient and the medieval periods. Having migrated from the Sino-Tibetan border regions through the numerous mountains passes the Bodos settling in the northern foot-hill regions of Bengal and Assam maintained trade links with the bordering hill tribes on the north and through them the Tibetans and the Chinese traders. Several

trade routes through these passes existed throughout the ages between Tibet and the north-eastern part of India.<sup>57</sup> The places in the foot-hills through which these passes opened up to the Indian plains were and are still known as *Kachai Dooar* meaning door or gate-way opening to the Kacharis. Several such Dooars existed on the northern foot-hills of Jalpaiguri in North Bengal and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darang and Sanitpur districts of Assam. In the North Bengal region these Dooars were often controlled and operated by the Bhutan authorities, whereas in the Assam region the same was done mostly done by the Tibetan authorities. The most famous trade route was the Lhasa-Tawang-Udalguri route which saw a considerable volume of barter trade between the Tawang Hill tribes and the Bodo tribes of Udalguri region. This trade link however did not end at Lhasa and extended much beyond right into the interior of Tibet and China.<sup>58</sup> The items imported through this route into India were Chinese silk, ponies, musk-wax, rubber and gold dust; whereas the items exported were rice, cotton yarn and cloth, silk yarn, dried fish etc. The Bhooteas (a collective name applied to all the tribes residing in the Bhootan hills and the western Arunachal Pradesh hills) used to come down during the winter season regularly through this route to Ualguri and through a few other similar passes to other bordering markets in Kamrup and Kokrajhar districts. Barter trade in the commodities named above used to take place between these hill traders and the Assam plain traders, mainly Bodos. Of all these border markets Udalguri was by far the biggest market and used to be known as the Bhootea Mela.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the Bodos had maintained a trading relationship even with the Tibet and China and probably they were benefited to some extent out of these trading activities with distant lands.

It may be noted that in spite of the high fertility of the soil, coupled with irrigated cultivation, abundant natural resources and little amount of foreign trade, the overall extent of Bodo economy was not more than the above of subsistence level. Under the impact of the British regime the entire peasant economy of Assam including those of the tribal people broke down beyond recovery. A very complex economic situation had developed in the societies of Brahmaputra valley of Assam with the taking over of power by the British imperialists. The pre-colonial society in Brahmaputra valley was semi-feudal and semi-tribal in nature hence a mixture of more than one classical mode of production prevailed. The economy was largely self-sustaining in those days. Colonial penetration in Brahmaputra valley and British administration thereof linked it with the capitalist world economy. This new form of economy unfolded new complexities with

serious socio-economic and political ramifications into the medieval society of the valley.

Much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of economic degradation, displacement and land alienation for the Bodo people. This may also perhaps be seen as a corollary to the loss of political power of the Bodos. The ruling class and aristocracy dissolved into the un-classed sections of the people of Assam valley. The common Bodos continued their age old practice of shifting cultivation. But here also they had to face economic hardships. The new land revenue system required payment of taxes in cash of which they had very little amount. As monetary system replaced the old barter system the Bodo traders could not cope with the requirement of capital in minutest transactions. This requirement was made by a section of hardworking and people with business acumen traders from Barpeta. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the total volume of the border trade in Udalguri area practically were out of the grip of the Bodos. This resulted in the total peasantization of the Bodos of lower Assam. In Goalpara, a section of the Bodo who became zamindars oppressed their fellow Bodos.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the British annexation of Brahmaputra valley brought about many changes in the socio-economic and political life of the people of Assam. They introduced conflict of interests between the local tribals and semi-feudal rulers, on the one hand and the new mercantile bourgeoisie, on the other. A novel system of governance based on rule of law, a bourgeois legal framework and an administration composed of hierarchy of officers and administrators was established and expanded.<sup>61</sup> Along with land tenure system a new mode of production relation was also evolved. For the first time land was purchased like commodity and thrown open to the market for sale in this pre-capitalist economy which was undergoing a process of peasantisation.<sup>62</sup> The colonial system of administration and management instead of solving the tribal's problem of survival had made their survival at stake. They did not take this oppressive system for granted. During the colonial rule series of killings, uprisings, insurrections were surfaced when the tribals suffered incursions and loss of land, swindling, bankruptcy and deprivation of their livelihood.<sup>63</sup> For example, in Nowgong district of Assam, the tribal ryots of Phulaguri village stood against the decision of imposing taxes on their houses, gardens and pan (betel-leaf) and eventually attacked and killed Lt. Singer in 18 September, 1861 who came to control the mob numbering around three thousands armed with clubs (lathies) gathered to protest the decision.<sup>64</sup>

After the advent of colonial rule, the tribal peasants and non-tribal population of this area came in contact with a new type of commercial economy, politico-legal system, western culture and ideals. In other words, the feudal tribal economy was no, in varying degrees, absorbed into the commodity economy based on monetary transactions. The characteristics of which were to generate surplus and marketing the amounts of agricultural produce; disappearance of hereditary tenancies or tenants hereditary rights on land; introduction of new land revenue system; a kind of marketing of labour through contractual, competitive, and often short-term tenancies; and polarization of classes. Land was transformed into commodity, the money became capital. Thus, the barter-oriented, moneys short economy was being replaced by the monetized commodity economy. Money became capital.<sup>65</sup>

The age old rural economy of Assam was seriously affected due to the introduction of money economy by the British regime. The land settlement system was free from all monetary transaction during the Ahom period. The British government made their first revenue assessment in 1843 and then after every few years kept on enhancing the rate of land revenue in successive assessments. This not only put the poor peasants, unaccustomed to such monetary payments, into a lot of hardship, but also made the system doubly oppressive because of an acute scarcity of coins, which had always to be obtained from Calcutta by the government from their mint by means of primitive modes of transport. Excessive exactions made by the corrupt revenue collectors like Choudhurys and Mouzadars further aggravated the situation.<sup>66</sup> In the given transitional situation of deficient currency supply and extremely limited facilities for marketing farm products, this policy caused hardship and resentment, for, peasants failed to secure enough cash to pay the land tax. In the interiormost areas, even around 1850, peasants had to walk long distances for two to three days to get their goods converted into cash. Such a situation naturally tended to inhibit any expansion of agricultural acreage.<sup>67</sup> In most of the cases, the peasants had to suffer from fraudulent practices in dealing with the brokers and traders while selling their produces and they usually hardly received proper due of their commodities. The conditions of the tribals reached to such a stage that they became scared of possessing more lands in the new system for fear of paying more revenues and most of them even joined in military services as well as in the tea gardens as labourers just to avoid paying high land revenues.<sup>68</sup>

A new land tenure system was also introduced in Assam by the colonial rulers. There was no hereditary ownership of land excepting the donated ones up till the end of the Ahom rule and land was treated as common property of the villagers where they also had the common rights over forest, minerals etc. But the colonial government conferred a permanent, heritable, transferable, and saleable right to different classes of owners of land, through The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886.<sup>69</sup> The land system in this region was integrated within the two broad systems of land tenure-the Zamindari and the Rayatwari systems. The districts of Goalpara and Cachar of the Brahmaputra valley belonged to the Zamindari system, whereas the other regions of the valley were under the Rayatwari system. The British government declared the *ryot* to have heritable, permanent and transferable rights over land through the Settlement Rules of 1870 and later on these rules were embodied in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1886 where in the permanently settled areas the lands were periodically allotted to the *ryots* with the rights to transfer and to take wasteland for reclamation.<sup>70</sup> Any land which was taken up for public purposes by the government, the *ryots* were entitled for compensation. On the other hand, land was settled annually in the fluctuating cultivated areas where the tribal people mostly inhabited.

The new land tenure system initiated by the British rulers adversely affected the tribal people as they were deprived of their age old rights such as the common ownership of land, forests, minerals etc. The situation became more dangerous when it initiated the system of granting lands to the tea planting class under the Wasteland Grants Rules, 1838.<sup>71</sup> This was followed by subsequent rules known as the Old Assam Rules, 1854, Fee Simple Grant Rules, 1862 Revised Fee Simple Rules, 1874, New Lease Rules, 1876, and The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886. Under these Rules large areas of land were granted to the tea planting class at favourable terms and at nominal prices. In 1872, the tea planters in Assam took a total of 3,71,990 acres under 318 estates. In 1878, the number of estates increased to 850 covering an area of 5,87,409 acres and then to 980 estates in 1928 covering an area of 16,29,524 acres.<sup>72</sup> With the beginning of inflow of government sponsored immigration to the valley mainly from the present day Bangladesh or the then East Bengal, the land issue became more dangerous for the indigenous peasantry of Assam in general and the tribal people in general.

The introduction of tea plantation in Assam by the colonial rule led to the massive migration of tribal labourers from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

They imported trained and educated Hindu Bengali manpower to fill up the service sectors. In addition, many more Bengalis came to Assam as lawyers, teachers, private doctors, shopkeepers, jewelers, tailors and so on. Besides Bengalis, Napalis also came to Assam initially as construction workers, tea estate, sugarcane plantations, mining labourers and as part of the colonial army.<sup>73</sup> In the absence of an indigenous business caste or class, the migrant Marwaris, the dominant trading class in Northern India, filled up the vacuum in business, trade and banking. Apart from Sylhet, Assam was naturally rich though thinly populated province. The colonial rulers therefore openly encouraged massive migration of various groups into Assam in order to augment their land revenue by bringing more and more land under cultivation and habitation. The Bengali Muslims from the then East Bengal were encouraged to migrate in the areas where vast tracts of cultivable land remained unutilized.<sup>74</sup> In 1942, Government of India directed the Assam Government to launch an intensive Grow more food campaign by utilizing all available land to provide adequate food to the allied troops stationed in Assam.<sup>75</sup> Taking advantage of the direction the Saadullah Government of Assam arranged massive immigration of Muslim peasants from East Bengal to Assam and settled them mainly in the Boro inhabited lower Assam districts. The real motive of the Assam Government headed by Md. Saadullah of the Muslim League became so obvious that Lord Wavell, the then Viceroy of India, could not help making the caustic comment that Saadullah's 'Grow more food' campaign was really a Grow more Muslims campaign.<sup>76</sup>

The process of depeasantisation was also started with the introduction of tea plantation industry. The poor oppressed peasants were squeezed to pay the enhanced land taxes, failure of which forced them to seek wage earning jobs in the plantation industry or flee to interior places. This had virtually made the agriculture stagnant, as every enhancement of new assessment of tax compelled the poor either to live peasantry or to work in the tea plantations. There also emerged a serious imbalance between the fast growing modern sector comprising the plantations, cash crops, coal mines, oil fields and the associated infrastructure, and on the other, the near stagnant traditional agricultural sector<sup>77</sup> which was suffering from substantial capital investment. The self-sufficient economy turned into a surplus generating economy was linked with the operation of World Market System. So the fluctuation in the international prices of jute and tea could impoverish the local peasants and tea plantation labourers respectively. For example, the post-war economic depression had adversely affected the tea industry in the 20's. This was solved by resorting to great reductions and wholesale dismissals of tea plantation

labourers without bothering about their plight.<sup>78</sup> But it is to be noted that the growth of tea industry did not lead to an equivalent generation of income and diffusion of gains amongst the indigenous population. To expand the economic frontier of tea-plantation many tribal tracts were encroached upon which resulted in the alienation of land from the tribal peasants. The British mercantile capitalist had to import labour from other parts of the country because the indigenous peasants were reluctant to work as wage labourers as it was not a part of their tradition. That is why, the tea planters had to import labourers from other regions of India.<sup>79</sup> Besides, the new technology of wet and dry land farming to generate surplus agricultural production made colonialists to bring the land-hungry agricultural peasants from the then East Bengal. This inflow of peasants was continued decade after decade. They were encouraged because the indigenous peasants did not know the wet land cultivation and the jute cultivation as well. These immigrants put tremendous pressure on tribal land. They tempted the local poor tribals by offering exorbitant prices and compelled them to part with their land. This alienated and evicted the tribals from their own lands. Moreover, with the operation of market forces and development of transport and communication, there came the middlemen. They performed a variety of functions as middlemen in administrative matters, as money-lenders, as traders who controlled production of foodgrains through the system of advance credit. All these gradually transformed the social, cultural, demographic, economic and political landscape of Assam. They could identify that their rights and privileges are being taken away which they enjoyed in the traditional social structure.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the colonial situation propelled massive migration into Assam, which, in the process, had brought an enormous change in the ethnic composition of population as well as in the economy of the British Assam. The land-abundant valley became land-scarce. The labour shortage economy turned into a labour surplus one. The relatively ethnic homogeneity of the society was replaced by ethnic heterogeneity.

The worst sufferer of the colonial policy was the poor and oppressed tribals. The Bodo community, being the largest tribe among the tribals of the North-East, was also largely affected by this British administrative policy. The Bodos on the whole suffered economically because of the British land revenue policies that made payment in cash compulsory. The Bodo cultivators soon became indebted to Barpetiah and Marwari traders and their land alienation started thereof. In order to avoid taxation, many Bodo peasants engaged themselves in wage-earning jobs in the tea plantations or in oil fields initiated by the British.<sup>81</sup> This community was also slow in taking to modern avenues of

employment opened by modernization. They had been easy targets for many glaring exploitations and injustices for decades due to their illiteracy and simplicity. The Bodos had been mainly agriculturists, who had not branched out into professions other than petty government jobs. Their cropping techniques remained traditional. Low productivity of land added to their economic hardship by making them indebted to rural moneylenders.<sup>82</sup> It is found out that 53.2 per cent plains tribals of Goalpara district alone were indebted to Kabuliwalas (money lenders) who provided them 70 per cent of loans at the interest rate ranging upto 100 per cent. Failure to refund loans eventually resulted in losing their land.<sup>83</sup>

The flow of the immigrants in the Bodo and other tribal dominated areas assumed a menacing problem by the 1920's so much so that Government had to introduce the famous Line System whereby imaginary lines were drawn in the districts under immigration pressure to segregate the indigenous population with that of immigrants. But this only ensured large and compact blocks of immigrant settlers in each districts, whereas on the ground corrupt revenue officials and other interested parties helped settling even new arrivals inside the line. In view of the growing number of immigrants there grew up tension in the minds of the indigenous people against them. The government, therefore, introduced the Line System in 1920.<sup>84</sup> This was with a view to restricting the indiscriminate settlement of the immigrants. It was first introduced in the district of Nowgong and subsequently extended to the Barpeta sub division of the Kamrup district and later the Line System was extended to almost all the districts of lower Assam. The Line System was an imaginary line drawn for separating the areas for settlement of the immigrants and the indigenous people. The following were the villages that were divided into three classes under the line system:<sup>85</sup>

- (a) Open Villages where immigrants were allowed to settle freely.
- (b) Closed Villages where they were not allowed to settle.
- (c) The Mixed Villages where a line was drawn and the immigrants were allowed to settle only on one side of it.

It may be observed that while introducing the line system the government did not give much importance in protecting the rights and interests of the indigenous people of Assam. Apart from this, the dubious and leniency of the state officials were also responsible for the failure of this system.<sup>86</sup> Thus the system violated by either side more often than not. Once the immigrants occupied a plot of land it became very difficult to



evict them from their possession. For example, in Barpeta sub-division alone, fifty closed villages were seized by the immigrants.<sup>87</sup> By the thirties the problem of land alienation of the Assamese population in general and the Bodo population in particular became so acute and the Line System became so ineffective that the Government had to appoint a high powered Committee under the Chairmanship of F.W. Hockenull, leader of the European Party in the Assam Legislative Council, to thoroughly study the working of the Line System and make recommendations for its improvement. This Committee submitted its report in February, 1938 wherein it stated that proper development of Assam's agriculture would not be possible without the aid of the immigrants and hence settlement of immigrants would have to continue. But it also stated that the line system should be further tightened in order to protect the interest of the tribals (i.e. the Bodos) in particular. But the situation did not improve much and by 1943 Saadullah himself admitted publicly that the immigrant Muslims were replacing not only the tribal peasants but even the Assamese Muslim peasants from their lands.<sup>88</sup> Within a short period of time the immigrants gained economic stability and some even turned out to be moneylenders. The immigrants lent money to the Assamese without any signed bonds and the Assamese having no means to pay back the money ultimately gave their lands to the immigrants absolutely bonafide.

As Line System miserably failed to protect the interest of the indigenous tribes, the Bordoloi Ministry, after the Independence in 1947 by passing an amendment added Chapter X to the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act 1886 whereby tribal Belts and Blocks were constituted in the compact areas predominantly inhabited by the tribals and backward classes entitled to be protected from land alienations and illegal encroachments, but despite this action, the various settlement policies implemented by successive Assam governments increased the number of non-tribals in these areas. Bodo leaders also note that the state government appropriated 600,000 acres for government projects.<sup>89</sup> Within a few years of Independence the greater part of the Belts and Blocks went out of their control. After the partition of India in 1947 thousands of Hindu refugees fleeing persecution in East Pakistan poured into Assam and settled in these Belts and Blocks. Taking into account the enormous tragedy then unfolding in East Pakistan, the Assam Government allowed the refugees to stay there on humanitarian grounds. Again in 1971, during the war of Liberation in East Pakistan thousands of refugees arrived in these Belts and Blocks.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the Act of 1947, did not provide adequate protection to the tribals from the pressure of non-tribals<sup>91</sup> even though the clauses of the Act mentioned

plainly that no person shall acquire or possess by transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement any land in any area or areas constituted in Tribal Belts and Blocks.<sup>92</sup> In a memorandum submitted to the President of India, The Plains Tribal Council of Assam vehemently criticized the policy of the Assam government and its utter failure to sincerely implement the Act of 1947. In the memorandum the PTCA stated that the Provisions of the Tribal Belts and Blocks could not serve the purpose for which they had been created not only because: (1) there were the lacunae in the provisions, (2) the provisions were not well publicized among the people for whose benefit they have been formulated and they remained ignorant about it, but because the guardians of the land, in whose hands the responsibility of implementation of these provisions were lying, were not willing to implement them sincerely. On numerous occasions the Tribal Sangha and other small local organizations and individuals tried to draw the attention of the Government of Assam to the encroachment made upon the tribal belts and blocks and in certain cases rioting broke out between the indigenous tribals and encroacher non-tribals, but the Government of Assam never took the necessary interest to take adequate steps to amend the wrong done to these Belts and Blocks.<sup>93</sup> The memorandum also mentioned that the bitter experience of the last 20 years of independence had given rise to a firm conviction among the tribals of Assam that the Assam Government is not interested in giving adequate protection to the tribal land. It deliberately rehabilitated refugees from East Pakistan in the Tribal Belts and Blocks areas, given settlement to the non-tribal encroachers in all the Belts and Blocks of the state of Assam in gross violation of the provisions of Belts and Blocks.<sup>94</sup> There was also a strong resentment about the immigrants' occupation of *patta* lands (Government waste land), unclassified forests and even reserved forests of the entire northern bank of the Brahmaputra. Attempts to evict these immigrants have so failed because of their strong financial standing and the long litigation process. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) also expressed their dissatisfaction in a memorandum simultaneously submitted to the President, the Prime Minister as well as the Home Minister of India respectively in the year of 1987 where they strongly stated that Land problem is the most burning problem of the tribals. The so called protective measures of the Tribal Belts and Blocks provided in the chapter X of Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 which practically a farce Act, never protected at all for the interest of the tribals. Unfortunately, lakhs of non-tribal encroachers have illegally occupied lands in tribal Belts and Blocks and they have got land *pattas* also in connivance with the Government officials. Tens of thousands of

common tribal mass people badly exploited and rendered landless and shelterless. U.N. Dhebar Commission suggested to cancel the illegally alienated land *pattas* and restored back to the original land owners in the case of tribal Belts and Blocks with retrospective effect from 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 but nowhere it has been implemented.<sup>95</sup>

It would be significant to highlight about a government official order issued from the office of Revenue (Settlement) Department, Settlement Branch, Dispur, Govt. of Assam on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1989 through a letter No. RSD 7/84/181 directing the Deputy Commissioner of Dhubri / Kokrajhar / Bongaigaon / Goalpara / Barpeta / Nalbari / Kamrup / Darrang / Sonitpur / Lakhimpur / Dhemaji / Tinsukia / Nagaon / Morigaon as well as the Sub-Divisional Officers of Gossaigaon / Bijni / North Salmara / Bajali / Rangia / Udalguri / Bishwanath / Jonai / Margherita / Sadiya / Kaliabor / Hojai to effectively implement the provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 (amended).<sup>96</sup> Shri D.K. Gangopadhyay, IAS, Commissioner and Secretary to the Govt. of Assam wrote in that official letter that in spite of specific instructions issued from time to time regarding speedy and effective implementation of the provisions of Chapter-X of the A.L.R.R. (as amended) specially removal of encroachments from the Tribal Belts and Blocks in the State, the progress of works done had not been found satisfactory. Government desired that the provisions of Chapter X of the Regulation should be implemented more vigorously. During recent years various organizations of Tribal people submitted memoranda before the Government expressing their dissatisfaction for not implementing the provisions of Chapter-X of the Regulation properly and speedily in Tribal Belts and Blocks. They pointed out that many irregularities such alienation of land by way of sale, exchange, lease, gift etc., registration of deeds and mutations/registration of names in land records in Tribal Belts and Blocks was done in favour of non-eligible persons violating the legal provisions contained in Chapter-X of the Regulation.<sup>97</sup> Thus, this government official letter reveals that there was huge apathy and irregularities on the part of officials in implementing the Chapter X of the Regulation which provided ample scope to the encroachers to legitimize their positions unfair means while hugely damaging the rights and conditions of the indigenous tribal population of the valley. The letter also provided us indications that the tribal population unitedly opposed and rose against the illegal encroachment of the non-tribals into their lands as well as shows their resentment against the apathy and inactiveness of the government officials to drive out the illegal encroachers and immigrants from the tribal Belts and Blocks.

Urbanization and industrialization also appeared to be a great menace to the economic steadiness of the plain tribes. Due to urbanization and industrialization, they were being uprooted from their original habitats, compelling them to move from place to place and ultimately forcing them to encroach upon the forest and other government *khas* lands. The successive state governments also time to time excluded some of the areas from these tribal belts and blocks for rehabilitation purpose, expansion and development of towns, cities ect. For example, the state government excluded an area of 11253 bighas 2 kathas 7 lessas of land from the Bijni Tribal Belts in 1962 by notification No. RSD 3/59/25, dated 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1962 for the purpose of rehabilitation of 1368 refugee families, who migrated from the erstwhile East Pakistan.<sup>98</sup> The area is known to be Bishnupur Colony now. Similarly, the state Government by notification No. RSD. 26/64/100, dated 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1969 also excluded some areas falling within North Lakhimpur town and also some areas of Nakari Mouza, Naoboicha Mouza and Kamalabari Mouza adjacent to the North Lakhimpur town from North Lakhimpur sub-montane, Tribal Belts considering the need for expansion and development of the town.<sup>99</sup> Large areas of lands were also excluded by the state government from the South Kamrup (Gauhati) tribal belts for the expansion of Guwahat city through the Government notification No. RD. 74/46/172, dated 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1950 in the Kamrup District.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the planning for industrial set up displaced thousands of tribal peasants from their land without rehabilitating them in other alternative settlements. For example, the Bongaigaon Petro-Chemical Complex encroached and alienated thousands of acres of tribal land.<sup>101</sup> So, in a gradual processes the tribal inhabited lands were being either forcefully transferred or they were being economically pressurized to leave their ancestral habitats.

Thus, the socio-economic conditions of the plain tribes, particularly the Bodos remained very backward and fully underdeveloped during the British regime as well as even in the post independent period. They remained very poor and led a life of abject poverty. During the British period, they had fallen into general indebtedness because of their low per capita landholding, lack of modern scientific method of agriculture, lack of infrastructural facilities and proactive government aids, certain traditional practices or habits like excessive brewing and consumption of rice beer etc. The process of depeasantisation also pauperized thousands of tribal peasants who were forced to work at low wages in the tea plantations of Assam. They were the victims of money-lenders, traders, merchants who usurped their lands through various illegal procedures. Illiteracy

and ignorance of the tribals were being extensively exploited. They had not been given proper safeguard. Money-lenders squeezed them with high rates of interest. Enhancement of taxes on lands periodically without considering the poor peasants' well-being, given them a feeling of deprivation. All these policies of the colonial regime created a class of pauperized peasants.<sup>102</sup> The product of colonial legacy especially the landlords, village mahajans, money-lenders, middleman brokers of land and commodities, zamindars, capitalist traders and businessmen etc. were all born or created to exploit and oppressed the tribals and poor peasants who due to excessive exploitation by these colonial agents became poorer day by day and fallen into abject poverty.

The colonial period was known for administrative confusion, of extortion and oppressions and miseries of the people. During the whole period of colonial rule the indigenous tribal people had come in contact with various advanced social groups and had gone through existential experiences of conflict and change. They have gone through a number of contradictions such as inter-tribal inequality, the grabbing of land of the poor tribal peasants by the money-lenders and landlords, the differential interaction and communication with the agents of civilization, viz. administration, educational facilities had led to the creation of inequality; the new forces of modernization had developed a unique middle class, the mercantile capitalism had developed a dependent economy characterized by the surplus production of raw material and agro-industrial products like jute, tea, pulses. In Assam the tea and oil industries were in the hands of the British bourgeoisie. The trade and commerce were in the hands of migrants businessmen. Wage earning labourers class was imported. Thus, in every way the interest of the indigenous tribal people was ignored or neglected. In other words, they were under perpetual hunger and poverty, economically dependent, and politically subservient to colonial rulers, and their middlemen.<sup>103</sup> There was also the very destructive role played by the village *mahajans* and business classes of people during the British regime as well as after independence because they have always been found resorted to fraudulent practices in dealing with the tribal peasantry that economically ruined them very miserably. They charged much higher interest of loans which were beyond the capacity of the peasant debtors. There were several system of contracting loans with the money-lenders or grain-dealers, such as, cash interest system, land mortgage system, the adhiar system, and the *dhana* system (contract of paying loans along with interests in terms of paddy at harvest time). In most cases the money-lenders and grain-dealers realised their interests and the principal in terms of agricultural productions, mainly paddy. The price of the paddy was

fixed at the time of the disbursement of the loan and much before harvesting.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the tribal rural economy was completely shattered into beyond revamp, yet, the successive governments were nowhere seen coming closer to the serious business in solving the miserable plight of the poor tribal peasants leaving them in whatsoever situations they have been for ages. Therefore, the Dhebar Commission correctly observed that the zamindars, money-lenders and contractors exploited the tribals to the maximum and the programme of preservation and conservation of forests for commercial exploitation resulted in a progressive encroachment on the land enjoyed by the tribals for centuries, led to the dislocation of tribal economy and the consequent frustration in the tribal mind.<sup>105</sup>

Under the above circumstances the Bodos had no alternatives than to follow the footsteps of other advanced communities like Assamese to safeguard and protect their community from gradual extinction in their own soil. Only from about the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century pressed by the immigrants from Bengal and Nepal and with education spreading among the newly emerging Bodo middle class looking for fresh avenues of employment other than traditional agriculture did the Boros find that they were really falling for backwards than their Assamese and Bengali neighbours in the race of earning decent livelihood, as well as all round progress in life. The religious and social reforms initiated earlier, as already described, and spread of education even in rural areas made the Boros look around and see how their Assamese neighbours had made so much progress in the short period of some fifty odd years.<sup>106</sup>

### **Political and Other Basis of the Bodo Movements:**

One of the major causes of the emergence of Bodo movements especially the identity assertion movements like language, script and literature movements as well as political autonomy movements can be directly attributed to the political aspirations of the educated middle class Bodo elites who combined with their individual ambitions and community development agendas played a very vital role in leading these movements. For the first time, the stage was set by the British rule for surfacing such kind of movements not only among the Bodos but also among the different communities of India as already discussed above. Many movements among the tribals in India, though initially started without political motives, yet, majority of them finally appeared to be inclined to political demands. So, the socio-cultural movements of the Bodos also twisting around with different circumstances finally reached to the stage of political movement. There

were certainly various political factors responsible for the emergence of different movements just as the political movement itself. Some of the other factors that closely related to the political root of the Bodo movements like language policy of the high caste Assamese Hindu ruling clique, impacts of Assamese nationality formation, lacking of provisions for constitutional safeguards, impacts of AASU movements, insecurity, exploitation, relative deprivation etc. also played major role in moulding and arousing Bodo national sentiments and identity formation that led to Bodo movements like the demand for Udayachal or Union Territory. The political factors of Bodo Movements like ambitions for resource manipulation, aims for economic rights and privileges, efforts of nation building and identity articulation, aspiration of power control, protection of rights and demand for equality etc. ultimately guided them to the path of movement for political self-determination.

In the modern sense of the term with emergence of a middle class through expansion of modern education and entry to jobs under colonial administration, seeds of identity-consciousness were sown. The major contribution of this modern middle class was that they could provide a definite direction to their identity through articulations in tune with the changed rational-legal framework. Though colonial administration was never expected to provide a people-oriented education system yet with the introduction of modern education the number of literate and educated people started increasing not only in the relatively advanced core Assamese society but also (may be at a lesser rate) in the non-Assamese indigenous societies of Assam. Number of government employees also kept on increasing over the years. With the spread of Christianity, expansion of education and increased scope for jobs in government establishments, the tradition-bound smaller societies, later on named tribes, became pregnant of an untraditional segment- the middle class. And this very class of people played a pioneering role in unfolding, consolidating and then spreading an identity-consciousness among the members of their own societies. In the early stage of blossoming, areas of contradiction between the middle class elements of core Assamese and peripheral Assamese (or indigenous non –Assamese) societies were naturally very much minimal. But with the increase in their volume in both types of societies, members of this middle class stood exposed to a hitherto unknown competition as placement opportunities leading to advancement in various economic spheres were not growing at an equal pace. As a result the tribal middle class now found the road to prosperity full of hurdles which was not exactly so in the initial phase.

On the other hand, social discriminations, alleged superiority complex of the caste-Hindu Assamese and the caste-based social equations gradually started pushing them away from whatever proximity might achieved with the core-Assamese society. Gradually the unresolved economic apprehensions started getting a political direction. The atmosphere of neglect and indifference expedited the withdrawal process further. The hurt sentiments of the middle class realized that without political power, no malady could be remedied and as a result bargaining for political power began. But no effective mechanism was evolved which could satisfy the legitimate aspiration of this tribal middle class. Instead, a deliberate attempt at projecting them as mere show pieces in different political organizations and forum without giving them any real power further damaged the situation. They were never taken into confidence and the governing caste-Hindu Assamese elite in fact never seriously thought of sharing power with them. This stubborn situation was potential enough to provide motivation for them to start thinking in terms of their own political boundary. Their leadership was already established in all spheres of their respective societies and as such it was not very difficult a task for them to arouse the latent identity-consciousness among their own people and direct it towards a self-determination aspiration.<sup>107</sup>

This somewhat a paradox that the Assamese middle class never ever had seriously considered of sharing a political power with the tribal elites and they also sincerely never thought of developing any method to solve the grievances and aspirations of the plain tribals. Furthermore, a hegemonic character developed among the Assamese nationalists that grew in stages through the freedom struggle of the country after independence whereby they remained totally devoted to the theory of complete assimilation of all ethnic groups and tribal elements with the greater Assamese nationality. The wishes and aspirations of the plains tribes of Assam did not fit in with this policy of the Assamese middle class elites. Prof. Gohain clearly remarked over the nature of Assamese nationalism as for one thing the development of freedom struggle brought two concepts of Assamese nationalism to the fore, at odds with each other. In view of the large numbers of tribal groups who shared the territory of Assam along with those known as Assamese, not to speak of such later additions as the Nepalese and the immigrant Muslims, it was considered vital to have an idea and a plan for the settlement of the nationality question. There was first the chauvinistic model pushed by the Assamese middle class elite, who took for all and called for an eventual assimilation of all ethnic and tribal elements into the dominant caste Hindu Assamese pattern. But there



had also been a democratic model advocated by the great radical author Jyoti Prasad and Bishnu Rabha and characterized by emphasis on co- existence, co-operation and solidarity through mutual respect and interaction. The latter never had a real chance as the left forces who could have been expected to implement it never acquired cultural and political hegemony over society. Though the Assamese ruling elite shows now and then a more liberal face it dares not retreat far from the chauvinistic model with predictable consequences.<sup>108</sup>

As their hopes and aspirations remained unattended all the time in spite of their wholehearted co-operation with the Assamese ruling elite, the plains tribals, mainly the Bodos, were totally becoming dissatisfied and disappointed. Their co-operation was taken for granted for the furtherance of the Assamese middle class interests. The General Secretary of the PTCA, Charan Narzary, writes that in the long course of their cooperation with the state Government they have, to their utter disappointment realized that all their hopes and expectations were totally belied. They had the most unpalatable experiences which revealed that underneath the loudly proclaimed policy there was something else in the minds of the custodians of their land and law, which was solely responsible for their miserable plight.<sup>109</sup>

Towards the end of the 1920s the Bodos showed a definite sign of political consciousness.<sup>110</sup> When Simon Commission visited India in the late 1928, the Bodo leaders led by Gurudev Kalicharan and others like Sardar Bahadur Belbung Ram Kachari, Jadav Chandra Khakhlary, Karendra Brahma Mandal, Baburam Brahma submitted a memorandum to the commission in 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1929 at Shillong demanding for a separate Electorate and reservations in the State and central Legislative Councils and also prayed for solutions on many other serious matters.<sup>111</sup> *Bodo Chatra Sanmilani* was formed in 1919 at Dhubri which took up the issues of general improvement for the language, culture, education facilities and also some of the burning political and economic issues like employment facilities of the Boros.<sup>112</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 of political gains and with a view to participate in the forthcoming election, they formed the Tribal League in 1933 which became a very powerful organization of the plains tribals and remained the sole political organization even after India achieved Independence.<sup>113</sup> The formation of the Tribal League was a step towards bringing all the mongoloid tribes and communities to a

common political platform. Their leaders, like Bhimbar Deuri for instance, realized that by remaining divided the communities would never be in position to exert enough political pressure to convince the Government as well as the national parties of their needs and aspirations. Their basic aim was to fight the socio-economic problems of the tribals.<sup>114</sup> The Tribal League dominated the tribal political affairs in Assam for more than 20 years which was transformed into a socio-cultural organization in 1954.<sup>115</sup>

Gradually a consciousness grew among the plains tribes that they enjoyed minimum constitutional safeguards whereas the tribes living in the Hill areas of Assam and other states enjoyed the right to protect, preserve their customs, traditions and identity as tribals under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule.<sup>116</sup> The Scheduled Tribes in Assam were deprived of such benefits and provisions. Moreover, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of the plains tribes of Assam. The tribal land was not well protected. A large chunk of tribal land was occupied by a host of immigrants who entered from East Bengal and encroached upon the tribal areas, and settled therein.<sup>117</sup> Despite the constant reminders to the Government, their grievances were not given due attention. Thus, unabated encroachment on tribal belts and blocks, gradual deterioration of general economic condition of the plains tribals and increase of landless people among the tribals deeply perturbed the minds of the plains tribals.<sup>118</sup> The ethnic identity, culture and language of the Bodos were increasingly jeopardized resulting in economic, social and political instability. A few conscious Bodo foresaw the gravity of the situation. They felt the need to form an organization which would strive for the preservation of their land, language culture and traditions. On November 16, 1952, a cultural and literary organization known as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was founded.<sup>119</sup> The BSS aimed at uniting the Bodos on the issue of language and encouraged the development and research on the Bodo language.<sup>120</sup> The BSS fought hard for a long period for the introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction at the school levels in the Bodo dominated areas and due to its constant efforts it was recognized for primary stage of education in 1963.<sup>121</sup> Along with the strong opposition of Assam Official State Language Bill of 1960, the Sabha also played more vital roles like pushing further ahead the Bodo medium instruction upto secondary level in 1968, launching vigorous movement of getting Roman script for Bodo language in 1974-75 though Devanagari script was finally accepted by the intervention of the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi.<sup>122</sup> In 1984, the Bodo language was also recognized as the Associate Official language of Assam in Kokrajhar District and Udalguri Sub-division due to the efforts made by BSS and ABSU.<sup>123</sup>

Language policy of Assam Government created displeasure and resentment among the tribes including the Bodos but despite all objections, the Assam Government passed the language Bill making Assamese as the sole official language of the state on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1960.<sup>124</sup> The ethnic feeling of the Assamese people had by then antagonized the non-Assamese population, and thus separatist tendencies developed among different communities within the State. Language problem reached such a stage that the Naga Hill District was separated to form a Separate State, Nagaland, in 1963, the Khasi Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills together constituted Meghalaya in January 1972, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh gain the status of Union Territories following the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act in 1971.<sup>125</sup> Similar reaction was found among the Bodos, the most numerous plains tribals when the Legislative Assembly approved the decision of the Academic Council of the Gauhati University making Assamese the sole medium of instruction at the University level. The decision convinced the Bodos that they could not preserve cultural identity within the political structure headed by the Assamese. Their aspiration was articulated by the Plains Tribal Councils and the BSS who demanded an autonomous area for them<sup>126</sup> and thus the political movement of the Bodos got a fillip with this language issue.

While Srimati Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India announced the policy of reorganization of Assam on Federal basis before the delegation team of Mizo Union in New Delhi on the 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1967 the Goalpara District Bodo Students' Union warmly welcomed the policy and immediately took the initiative to form the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) in 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1967 and since then demanded a Separate State for the plains tribal people of Assam.<sup>127</sup> With the same view, at the enthusiasm and initiative of ABSU the Political Party of Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA) was also formed on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1967 at Rongjasali Hall, Kokrajhar. The PTCA for the first time submitted Memorandum to the then President of India Dr. Zakir Hussain on the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1967 at New Delhi for the creation of an Autonomous Region for the Plains Tribal people of Assam. The wave of the demand of Autonomous region gradually gain momentum and thus Autonomous Region demand was upgraded to the demand of Union Territory which was given the nomenclature as *UDAYACHAL* on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1973.<sup>128</sup> But the PTCA was not successful to launch further programs since the BSS planned to begin a movement with the demand for Roman Script for the Bodo language that resulted in the postponement of the PTCA movement for Udayachal for the time being.<sup>129</sup> The Bodo Sahitya Sabha introduced the Bodo primer *Bithorai* in class 1 of the Bodo medium

schools in the early 1974 on its own accord. The state government rejected this move of the BSS and adopted a rather harsh method to deal with the situation by stopping all kinds of grants to those schools which had introduced this unrecognized text book which further worsened the situation. There was a strong protest and thus began a mass movement by the BSS in 1974-75. The language issue largely contributed for the movement by the Bodos for the break-off from Assam.<sup>130</sup>

While the Roman Script issue was somehow solved with the intervention of the centre, the PTCA movement for Udayachal gained more and more support. Meanwhile nationwide Emergency was clamped in 1975. When in 1977 the Emergency was over, the PTCA entered into an alliance with the Janata Party on 4 June, 1977 to contest the forthcoming election. In 1977 election, PTCA won one seat from the ST reserved Kokrajhar Parliamentary Constituency and won four out of nine contested in Assembly election, and finally joined the Coalition Ministry headed by Golap Borbora.<sup>131</sup> The PTCA leaders Mr. Samar Brahma Chaudhury and Mr. Charan Narzary returned to the Legislative Assembly and Parliament respectively. But suddenly, most shocking to the Tribal mass people the two PTCA leaders announced on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1977 that the PTCA had given up the demand of Udayachal, the Union Territory but wanted to experiment only Autonomous Region once again and thus retreated from the popular and emotional mass demand.<sup>132</sup> The sudden withdrawal from the demand of Union Territory in favour of Autonomous Region was largely resented and reacted by the party hardliners and ABSU and vehemently condemned the top PTCA leaders for belying the mass people's political aspiration of separate state.<sup>133</sup> That ultimately led to the split in the PTCA on ideological lines and gave rise to the PTCA (Progressive) led by B. K. Basumatary who formed the United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF).<sup>134</sup> The ABSU had been taking interest for unification of PTCA and PTCA (P) since 1979, but failed due to the ideological differences among the leaders of both the parties. The ABSU did not give up the idea of unification and as such it organized a convention of All Tribal Organizations from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1984 at Harisinga in Darang district, Assam, wherein the PTCA (p) was dissolved and a new political party UTNLF was formed on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1984.<sup>135</sup> The UTNLF working in tandem with the ABSU and both the organization blamed the PTCA for sacrificing the interests of the tribals.<sup>136</sup> By that time the PTCA leaders lost much of their creditability because of their internecine strife and their brief association with the Assam Government when they joined the short-lived Janata Ministry of Assam in 1978-79.<sup>137</sup> Most of the tribal leaders and also the Bodo

Sahitya Sabha withdrew their support from Udayachal movement finding the PTCA role unsatisfactory. They never supported the idea of creation of separate state for they believed that the mere creation of separate state would not solve their problem. Thus the PTCA lost its hold on the Udayachal issue in 1985 General Election.<sup>138</sup>

The utter failure of PTCA to achieve the demand of *Udayachal* ultimately resulted into the shifting of leadership for future political movement of the Bodos in the hands of ABSU. Since its inception, ABSU had been actively supporting the movement for political autonomy and demand for separate Homeland for the plain tribals in general and for the Bodos in particular. The ABSU submitted memorandum to the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi demanding for a separate state on several occasions in 1972 at Shillong, in 1980 at New Delhi and in 1983 after the turmoil of 1983 election in Assam.<sup>139</sup> The delegation of ABSU also submitted a memorandum on demand of separate state to the then Home Minister of India Giani Zail Singh in 1980 while he visited Guwahati. Again, on the 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1985, a delegation of ABSU submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi urging him to create a separate state. The most important memorandum was submitted under the leadership of its President Mr. Upendra Nath Brahma to the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 1987 at New Delhi contained all the detailed issues and justifications for the demand of a separate state for plains tribal people of Assam. The same delegation also met Home Minister Mr. Buta Singh and the President of India Mr. Giani Zail Singh respectively on 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1987 and raise the demand of separate state.<sup>140</sup> Despite repeated demands made by the ABSU and other Bodo organizations to solve the separate state issue, no genuine initiative was undertaken both by the State and Central Governments for redressing the Bodo grievances.

Meanwhile, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) signed the Assam Accord in August, 1985 bringing to an end the six years long Anti-Foreigners movement where initially ABSU and other Bodo political leaders supported the agitation with the same view to drive out the illegal migrants from their areas. In the later period of the movement, the real intension of the AASU leaders became clear which envisaged only the Assamese cultural dominations over other groups and for this reason the Bodo leaders gradually disassociated themselves from the movement. The final rift came when the Accord was signed and no specific provision was made in the Accord to protect the Boro interest in particular.<sup>141</sup> The ABSU took particular exception to two specific provisions of

the Assam Accord. Clause 6 of the Accord asked for legislative and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The ABSU leaders naturally took it as complete negation of the composite and diverse cultural and linguistic milieu of Assam in the context of the most indigenous section of the population of Assam i.e. the Boros.<sup>142</sup> The other clause 10 provided for strict prevention of encroachment on all Government lands and lands in the tribal Belts and Blocks. The ABSU leaders apprehended that while the first part of the clause would be enthusiastically implemented by the AGP government because Assamese people would not be affected by that as there was no encroachment by the Assamese people in the government lands such as reserved forests whereas it would do so to the Bodos who due to the landless status already had made massive encroachment in the forests, but the second part of the clause would be conveniently ignored because it would benefit the Bodos and affect the sentiments of many Assamese people, particularly the Barpetiahs.<sup>143</sup> Again the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) Government just after assuming power imposed Assamese language as compulsory third language upon the non-Assamese medium students in secondary schools. The Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) came with a circular to this effect on 28 February, 1986. The ABSU started the movement against the circular.<sup>144</sup> The intensions of AGP government was clear to the fact that it wanted to make the knowledge of Assamese an important requirement to enable one to get Government jobs.<sup>145</sup>

Under all the circumstances, the ABSU had left no other option than to more intensely strengthen the movement for solving all the vexed Bodo issues including the statehood demand and ultimately decided to launch a vigorous democratic mass movement for the fulfillment of its 92 points Charter of Demands scheduled to be started from 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1987 where, besides some socio-economic problems, three major political demands would also be raised before the Government of India as well as Assam. The political demands were mainly- creation of a Separate State of Bodoland, creation of two District Councils on the Southern bank of river Brahmaputra and the inclusion of Bodo Kacharis of Karbi Anglong into the S.T. (Hills) list.<sup>146</sup> Thus the Bodoland Movement marked the beginning on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1987 under the leadership of late Bodofa (Father of the Bodos) Upendra Nath Brahma who until his dead led the entire courses of the movement up to 1990.<sup>147</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of 1988 held at Bashbari in Dhubri District, ABSU scaled down its 92 points Charter of Demands into three comprising only the three major political demands<sup>148</sup> that mentioned already. In that

very conference itself the ABSU, for the first time launched a people's organization namely Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC) with a view to bring a vigorous Mass Movement for achieving the main goal Separate State of Bodoland and also to get conceded the other two political demands.<sup>149</sup>

ABSU-BPAC led movement lasted for six years passed through many stages and phases, and marked by prolonged period of Bandhs (Blockades, closures), disrupting the rail and road links of Assam and the rest of the North-Eastern Region. Although its leaders termed the movement peaceful, it resulted in considerable loss of life due to bomb explosions, police action and wanton acts of destruction.<sup>150</sup> The prolonged movement seriously affected the economy of Assam and the entire North-Eastern region. The Chief Ministers of the six northeastern states that were affected by the frequent bandhs urged the movement leaders, the Assam government, and the center to move quickly toward a settlement.<sup>151</sup> Finally, on 20 February, 1993 the Bodo Accord was signed at Guwahati formally ending the six years Bodland agitation leading to the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC).<sup>152</sup>

The Bodo leaders again rejected the BAC Accord in the year 1996 terming it mockery in the name of Autonomy which totally failed to fulfill the aspiration of the Bodo people and ultimately another Bodo Accord was signed in 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2003 between the Bodoland Liberation Tigers (BLT), State and Central Government bringing into end the long pending political autonomy demand of the Bodos. Yet, again the demand for separate statehood recently gained momentum by the recent formation of a new state of Telengana bifurcated from the state of Andhra Pradesh.

The demand for political autonomy was the result of a definite socio- economic and political change leading to identity articulation among the Bodos which goaded them to the path of movements for determining their own survival. They gradually became aware of their miserable and pathetic socio-economic and political conditions, and they no more wanted to remain dormant as a vulnerable, insecure, exploited, backward, marginalized and deprived of rightful privileges in their own soil and the only right way they deemed to overcome all these problems was to choose the path of movement for determining their own survival.

Thus, the Bodoland Movement emerged as a significant event in the domain of Bodo history. B. M. Das<sup>153</sup> says that in a very general way it may be said that many of the ethnic groups of Assam at one time (even now) were economically exploited, socially

ill-treated and neglected, deprived of their dues and rights, dominated by the more powerful groups because of their backwardness, illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, simplicity and the like. With the passage of the time spread of modern education through different agencies has enlightened them, helped them to realise their condition, made conscious of their rights. Influx of outsiders has created a major problem. They feel that they are losing their earlier status in their native land. They want to grow, develop, progress, and prosper in their chosen ways and means. They want to be rule by themselves. In the same way, therefore, for the Bodos too, in order to achieve their goal there seemed to be no other alternatives than to follow the path of movement.

### Endnotes

1. Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma, *Social Mobility: From Tribalism to Indianism: The Bodos: (The Aboriginal People of Eastern India)*, Kokrajhar, Onsumoi Library, 2008, pp. 2-3.
2. G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol.III, Part II Indian Reprint, New Delhi, pp. 1-17.
3. The last Bodo kingdom ‘Cachar’ was finally annexed by the British on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1832 following the murder of its last king Govindachandra in 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1830. The central and Northern portion of the kingdom held by Tularam Senapati with the help of the British was also annexed by it in 1854. For detail see- Kachari Buranji by S. K. Bhuyan and Assam District Gazetteers, vol. VI by B. C. Allen.
4. Birinchi Kumar Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period)* Vol. I, Guwahati, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1986, p. 7.
5. *Ibid.*, 7.
6. S. K. Chatterji, *Kirata Jana Kriti, Kolkata*, Third Reprint March 2011, p. 46.
7. Sir Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Guwahati, 1926, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, p. 236.



8. P. C. Bhattacharjee, *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language* cited by H. M. Deka in *Politics of Identity and the Bodo Movement in Assam*, Astral, New Delhi, 2014, p. 19.
9. S. Sharma & P. Devi, *A Brief Account of the Bodo Kacharis of Assam*, NEIHA, Shillong, 1993, p. 96 cited by H. M. Deka, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
11. Ajay Roy, *The Bodo Imbroglia*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1995, p.19.
12. S.K. Bhuyan, *Studies in the History of Assam*, Lawyer's Book Stall Guwahati, 1965, p. 46
13. G.P. Singh, *The Kiratas in Ancient India*, New Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1990, p. 355.
14. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case of Bodo Kacharis of Assam*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1996, p. 45.
15. Hira Moni Deka, *Politics of Identity and the Bodo Movement*, New Delhi, Scholars World, 2014, p. 20.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Ajay Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 15
18. C.C. Sanyal, *The Meches and the Totos of North Bengal*, (Darjeeling: North Bengal University, 1973), p. 11.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
20. B.N. Bordoloi, *Tribes of Assam*, Part-I, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1987, p. 6.
21. D.N. Majumdar, "Social organization of the Koch of Garo Hills" in *A Common Perspective for North-East India*, Calcutta, Navana Printing Works, 1967, p.68 (cited by N.K. Das in *Ethnic Identity Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India*, New Delhi, Inter-India, 1989, p. 58)
22. S.K. Chatterji, *Kirata-Jana-Kriti* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, Third Reprint, 2011), p. 51.
23. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case of Bodo Kacharis of Assam*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1996, p. 48.

24. Khema Sonowal, *Why Bodo Movement?* Guwahati, EBH Publishers, 2013, pp. 12-13.
25. B. Narji, *Boro Kacharir Samaj Aru Sanskriti* (in Assamese), Bina Library, Guwahati, 3rd ed., 1985, pp.15 & 163.
26. Amalendu Guha, *Medieval and early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity, Economy*, Calcutta, K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1991, p. 101.
27. Rev. Sidney Endle, *The Kacharis*, New Delhi, Akansha Publishing House, Reprint: 2010, pp. 4-5.
28. Khema Sonowal, *op.cit.* pp. 13-14.
29. Kameswar Brahma., *Srimat Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma* (Written in Bodo language in Bengali-Assamese script), Gossaigaon, 1986, pp. 5-7.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Bulletin of the tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 1987 vol. I, No.V, p. 6.
32. Sekhar Brahma, *Religion of the Boros and Their Socio-Cultural Transition: A Historical Perspective*, Guwahati, DVS Publishers, 2006, p. 55.
33. Sebastian Ayilookunnel, *Christianity Among the Bodos* in Thomas Pulloppillil & Jacob Aluckal (ed.), *The Bodos: Children of Bhullumbuttur*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1997, p. 48.
34. *Ibid.* pp. 48-49.
35. Sekhar Brahma, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
36. *Ibid.*
37. H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and the North- East*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1986, p. xiix.
38. *Ibid.*, p. iv.
39. Sekhar Brahma, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
40. Kameswar Brahma., *op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.
41. Sekhar Brahma., *op.cit.* p. 61.
42. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

43. Brahma religion is basically based on the belief of one God or one supreme being (Monotheistic) called 'Brahma' derived from the Vedic Upanishad Brahman religious discourses, the founder of which attributed to Sivnarayan Param Hansa Swami elsewhere in Calcutta, Bengal in the last part of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the same was brought and preached by Kalicharan Brahma among the Bodos in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. For details see-Journey "*Towards Enlightenment*" by Bidyasagar Narzary & Malabika Mitra and *Srimat Kalicharan Brahma by Kameswar Brahma*.
44. Kameswar Brahma, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-36.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma (in Assamese), Jorhat: Assam Sahitya Sabha, 1983,p.20 ( Quoted in C. Bhattacharjee, *op.cit.* p. 73)
47. Kameswar Brahma., *op. cit.*, p. 16.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Why Separate State of Bodoland: Demand and Justification* (Published by ABSU, Kokrajhar, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1998) p. 54.
50. Khema Sonowal, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
51. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
52. B.N. Bordoloi, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
53. N.N. Vasu, *The Social History of Kamarupa*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1980, p. 70.
54. Sucheta S. Chaudhuri, *The Bodo Movement and Women's Participation*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2014, p. 35.
55. S. Endle, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
56. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
58. *Ibid.* pp. 21-22.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Hira Moni Deka, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

61. M.C. Paul, "Udayachal Movement, Plains Tribals & Social Structure in Assam Valley: A Sociological Exploration" in Buddhadeb Chaudhuri ed. *Tribal Transformation in India*, Inter-India, New Delhi, 1992, p. 360.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
64. H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, vol. I, 1999 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), pp. 89-93.
65. M.C. Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.
66. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
67. A. Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj*, Guwahati, Anwasha Publications, 2016, p. 7.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Gangopadhyay, D.K, *Revenue Administration in Assam*, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati, 1990, p. 136.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Sarajit K. Chatterjee, *North-East India: Dispersion and Discontent*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi, 2010, p. 545.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Amalendu Guha, *op. cit.*, 32.
78. A.C. Bhuyan, ed., *Political History of Assam*, Vol. II, 1978, p. 26 (cited by M.C. Paul in *Dimension of Tribal Movements in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley*, p. 67).
79. M.C. Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
80. *Ibid.* p. 68.
81. Hira Moni Deka., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
83. Govt. of Assam, Draft outline Fifth Five Year sub-plan for SC, ST and O.B.C., 1974, p. 4.
84. Ajay Roy., *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
85. Bhuyan, A.C., et al, ed., Political History of Assam Vol.II-III, Govt. of Assam, 1999 reprint, pp. 309-310.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
87. *Ibid.*
88. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
89. J. N. Das, 'Udayachal Movement in Assam' in Indian Journal of Political Science (Madras) 50:3 (July-September 1989), pp. 335-36.
90. S. N. Mondal, *History and Culture of the Bodos*, Satali Mondal Para, W. Bengal, 2011, p. 100.
91. Government of India, Dhebar Commission Report (1960-61), vol. I, p. 118.
92. Government of Assam, Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act of 1947, Article 162 (2). Quoted in M. C. Paul, *op.cit.* pp. 364-65.
93. P.S. Datta, *Autonomy Movements in Assam (Documents)*, Edition-I, New Delhi, Omsons, 1993, p. 129.
94. *Ibid.*
95. Why Separate State, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-60.
96. *Land Administration in Projected Belts and Blocks of Assam*, Govt. of Assam, Revenue Department, Dispur, pp. 98.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
101. M.C. Paul, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
102. N.C. Dutta, *Land Problems and Land Reform in Assam*, S. Chand, Delhi, 1968, p. 30.
103. M.C. Paul, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

104. B.N. Bordoloi, ed. *Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness*, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1986, pp. 24-25.
105. Dhebar Commission Report, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.
106. Ajay Roy., *op. cit.*, p. 41.
107. P.S. Datta, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.
108. Hiren Gohain, *Frontier*, Vol.22, no.13, November 11, 1989.
109. Souvenir of the 17th Annual Session of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Barama, 1976, p. 5.
110. Chandana Bhattacharjee., *op. cit.*, P. 74.
111. Kumud R. Brahma., *Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and the Bodos in Modern Times*, in Mugani Sakhi ( ABSU Mouthpiece), Mushalpur, 2005, pp. 57-58
112. Ajay Roy., *op. cit.*, p.41.
113. Chandana Bhattacharjee., *op. cit.*, p.76.
114. A.C. Bhuyan (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, Vol. III, Guwahati, 1999 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), pp. 311-312.
115. A memorandum to the Three Members Expert Committee on Bodo issues by ABSU & BPAC, 8 April, 1991, Kokrajhar, p. 74.
116. S. N. Mondal., *op. cit.*, p. 100.
117. B. C. Bhuyan., *Political Development of the North-East India*, New Delhi, Omsons, 1989, p. 56.
118. *Ibid.*
119. S. N. Mondal., *op. cit.*, p. 101.
120. Noas Swargiary., *The Bodo Mass Movement since Independence* in Thomas Pulloppillil & Jacob Aluckal Ed. *The Bodos Children of Bhullumbutter*, Guwahati, 1997, p. 84.
121. Chandana Bhattacharjee., *op. cit.*, p. 99.
122. ABSU Memorandum to *Three Member Expert Committee*, 8 April, 1991, p. 74.
123. *Why Separate State*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
124. *Ibid.* p., 38-39.
125. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
126. Snehamay Chaklader., *Minority Rights: A Sociological Analysis of Group Conflicts in Eastern Region of India*, Calcutta, 1987, pp. 24-25.

127. *Why Separate State, op. cit.*, p. 22.
128. *Ibid.*
129. Samar Brahma Chaudhury, 'On Udayachal Movement' in B. C. Bhuyan (ed.), *Political Development in the North-East*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 116
130. Chandana Bhattacharjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.
131. *Ibid.* p. 103.
132. *Why Separate State, op. cit.*, p. 23.
133. *Ibid.*
134. L. S. Gassah (ed.), *Regional Political Parties in North-East India*, New Delhi, 1992, p. 86.
135. *Why Separate State, op. cit.*, p. 24.
136. Telegraph, Calcutta, 19 February, 1989.
137. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
138. Abdul Halim., 'Role of Regional Political Parties in Assam' in B.C. Bhuyan (ed.) *Political Development in the North-East*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 65.
139. *Why Separate State, op. cit.*, p. 25.
140. *Ibid.* 26.
141. Ajay Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
143. *Ibid.*
144. Lohit Hazarika, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-26
145. Hira Moni Deka, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
146. *Why Separate State, op. cit.*, p. 4.
147. *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
149. *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.
150. Sudhir Jacob George, *The Bodo Movement in Assam: Unrest to Accord*, Asian Survey, Vol.34 No.10 (Oct., 1994), p. 883.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 884.
152. Memorandum of Settlement (Bodo Accord), Guwahati, Government of Assam Press, 1993, pp.1-10.
153. B. M. Das., *Ethnic Aspiration in Assam-Some Observations* in Indira Barua, Sarthak Sengupta and D. D. Das ed. *'Ethnic Groups, Cultural Continuities and Social Change in N. E. India'*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 16.