Chapter-II

Political Economy of Bodo Movement:
A Profile from the Literature

2. 1 Profile of Bodos
   2.1.1 Socio-Economic Aspects
   2.1.2 Linguistic and Cultural Heritages
   2.1.3 Ethnic and Cultural Solidarity
   2.1.4 Political Developments

2.2 History of Bodo Aspirations
   2.2.1 Pre-Independence Awareness
   2.2.2 Post-Independence Developments

2.3 Chapter Summary
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Political Economy of Bodo Movement:
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The political economy of Bodo movement involves many issues which include socioeconomic as well as political ones. Bodos in Assam are trying hard to preserve their ethnic identity, language, socio-political rights, religion and culture through creation of a state namely Bodoland. An overall profile of the Bodo community, drawn from the stock of the existing literature, has been presented in this Chapter for understanding the identity issues, apparently worked behind the Bodo movement.

2.1 Profile of Bodos

2.1.1 Socio-Economic Aspects

Over time there have been some changes in the population distribution of Bodos in Assam. About 43.19 per cent of tribal population of the state was Bodo in 1951. The figure has been fluctuating from one Census year to another. In 1971, it was reduced to 40.11 per cent and then increased to 41.12 per cent in 1991. Again, in 2001 it marginally decreased to 40.89 per cent. This fluctuation has been of course due to many reasons viz. in and out migration, massive infiltration of people from Bangladesh, re-organization of the state, etc. All these have resulted in the change in demography pattern of Bodos in Bodo-dominated areas of the state. This has caused an alarm to the leaders of the movement.

Land to a tribal was a part of socioeconomic and cultural heritage (Brahma, 1989). More than 95 per cent of them are dependent upon agriculture
and allied activities in the state. Land is the only tangible asset of a tribal family. The emotional ties with the land lie with the fact that it provides the burial ground for their ancestors with whom they would be united after death and sacrificial grove where they propitiated their spirits. There are a number of social and religious rituals connected with land, which establish emotional ties between the tribal and the lands. The ownership of land among them broadly falls under three categories, viz. (a) community land (b) land possessed by an individual, and (c) land belonging to a particular clan. In the absence of settlement or up-to-date record of land rights, they are at the mercy of petty officials of revenue and forest departments and the mighty landlords. When 95 per cent of tribal depend on agriculture about 70 per cent of them have become practically landless (Brahma, 2001). One of the great suffering endured by them for generation has been the alienation of their ancestral land. The process of land alienation was aided initially by the government during colonial times. They were not granted permanent land rights partly because of the fact that many of them who were peasants were also migratory cultivators.

During fifties, the state government of Assam under the Congress Govt. created a number of Tribal Belt and Blocks (about 40 of them) in which only tribal and scheduled castes could own land, but the encroachments and land grabbing persisted. Various settlements policies of the successive state governments brought new settlers on the tribal land. The land transference to the non tribal or outsiders in the Tribal Belt and Block began after the British came. But infect transference of tribal land in the hands of outsiders or non-tribal, especially money lenders and absentee landlords, started much before the advent
of the British in the region. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 has the provision to control such illegal transfer of land but it was partially successful in its implementation. The so called protective measure of land provided in the Act was not enforced. The Bodo leaders alleged that besides this encroachment, the state Govt. had taken away about six lakhs acres for Govt. projects. The present Capital of the state, ‘Dispur’ stands on land which once belonged to the tribal people. Mr. Thaneswar Boro, then Revenue Minister of Assam (AGP Govt.) himself once admitted that 2,13,040 bighas of land in Tribal Belt and Blocks were under illegal occupation of the non-tribal encroachers.

As per the Clause 10 of the Assam Accord, encroachment of lands is strictly to be prevented; unauthorized encroachers to be evicted and the relevant law to be enforced. When the AGP leaders assumed office, the non-tribes were flourishing in their businesses in some pockets and they were in fact provided with the necessary infrastructure. Thus, unabated encroachment of land, increase in the number of landless tribal, unemployment and gradual deterioration of general economic conditions in spite of government developmental activities created discontentment among the tribal youths. Observing the situation, AASU and ABSU jointly demanded eviction of all non-tribes from the Tribal Belt and Blocks.

Like land, forest is also intimately connected with tribal life. “It is the abode of the spirits, the place of worship” (Chattopadhay, 1988) and the seat of life cycle ceremonies including burial (sardhana). Forest provides the tribal with food, fuel, fertilizer, fodder, farm implements and material equipments for family
use. Rope making by bamboo, thatch, rearing of animals, such as goat, cow, and gathering of fuel etc amply illustrate the importance of forest in tribal life. However, urbanization and industrialization along with tremendous growth of population (both natural and migration), reduction of landholding, pressures of money economy and the ingenuity of more advanced groups, made the situation desperate for the Bodo peasants who were compelled to move to the reserve forests and the traditional areas for their settlement and shifting cultivation. Even after moving to forests they were also not free from problems. AGP government passed a law legitimizing eviction of unauthorized tribal who had settled in the forests and reserved areas. That is why Bodo people have been trying to preserve their own land rights and forest. The economy of the tribes is greatly dependent on collection and sale of wood and other minor forest produce. It is learnt that 10 to 20 per cent of the income of an average tribe family in the major tribal concentration is obtained through the sale of the minor forest produce.

Employment is a major problem among the plains tribes of Assam because of low literacy and education. Few Bodo youths who received higher education with great difficulties could not get good jobs by competing with other non-tribe educated youths who are politically more powerful. In the state only 10 per cent of jobs are reserved for the plains tribes, and appointments are made on the basis of party affiliation and other communal considerations. Even the state Govt. has set knowledge of Assamese language as a pre-requisite in state services without having any regards for Boro language, violating Article 15 and 16 of the Constitution and Clause No.7 of Assam Official Language Act, 1960. The Govt. has no answer for the backlog in the recruitment of tribal candidates to the third
and fourth grade posts in state govt. Therefore, Bodos in Assam has been agitating for separate homeland so as to avail various socio-economic opportunities in this juncture.

### 2.1.2 Linguistic and Cultural Heritage

The language tangle is one of the most critical and sensitive issues confronting the Bodos in Assam. Assam is already polarized on ethnic and linguistic lines. Language is the most effective medium of exchanging views, ideas, culture and way of expression of human personality. As such, it is used by the people as a symbol of identity of their communities. Chatterjee (1974) lauded the Bodos for its richness in language and historicity. Hodgson used the word ‘Bodo’ for the first time to denote Bodo language and its speakers (Brahma, 1989). Since then missionary researchers and writers have started taking keen interest and investigations into the origin and development of Bodo language. Missionary works on Bodo language and grammar had begun in 1797 and ended in 1959, the year of publication of Bodo grammar by Rev. H Holversrud.

However, Assamese language was thrust upon the non Assamese population including the indigenous tribes. Because of this reason Bodo movement initially had a literary bent. Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was founded in 1952 to unite Bodos on language basis and to work towards development of Bodo language. Demand was made to introduce Bodo language in the schools of Bodo dominated areas. Accordingly, Bodo as a medium of instruction was conceded after a prolonged agitation at the primary level in 1963 and subsequently in the
secondary level of education and textbooks and other ancillary literary works were brought out in Bodo language.

Though Bodo language was conceded, the Assamese script was thrust upon the Bodos. This was objected through various agitations in the early seventies and demand was made for Roman script. A settlement was made for the Devnagari script in 1976. Further, just after assuming power the AGP government imposed Assamese language as compulsory third language in all the secondary schools through a circular given by the Secondary Board of Education of Assam on 28th February 1986. This incensed the Bodos and other non-Assamese communities in the state. Though it was later revoked, the Bodos felt of being dominated by the majority in the pretext of Assamese as a regional language and the official language of the state linking different communities within it. The AGP government also issued notification making the knowledge of Assamese, a pre condition for employment in Assam State Services violating the Assam Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1985 by which Bodo was recognized as associate official language in Bodo dominated areas. This hampered the employment avenues of students educated in medium of instruction other than Assamese.

2.1.3 Ethnic and Cultural Solidarity

Bodos have a genuine aspiration to establish a distinct Bodo nationality and to get recognition in the world as a civilized society and an advanced nationality. Basic question that arises is that of their survival, and preservation and growth of their ethnic identity. They feel that they have no chance of
preserving their own culture and heritage in the present setup and atmosphere and therefore they resented towards state administration. They neither wanted to share their territory with other ethnic groups nor recognized the government of the state to represent their interest and aspirations. The perception among them of having their own heritage and culture is deep rooted; and their urge to preserve the Bodo identity has come in sharp conflict with the attempt of the Assamese people to maintain their language, culture and political domination. Since various ethnic groups in the N.E. Region and other parts of the country have been allowed to maintain their distinctive identity through ages the demand for such type of identity by Bodos is quite obvious and justified. In fact smaller states were carved out from Assam on the basis of ethnic considerations. For examples, Mizos got Mizoram, Khasis, Jaintias and Garos got Meghalaya, Nagas got Nagaland, Manipuris got Manipur in the N.E. Region. Similarly, outside the northeastern region, Bengalis got West Bengal, Oriyas got Orissa, Telugu got Andhra Pradesh, Tamilians got Tamil Nadu, Marathis got Maharashtra, Gujaratis got Gujarat, and Punjabis got Punjab etc.

The Bodo culture attained its distinctiveness over the years marked by a close relationship between nature and man, egalitarianism social structure, accommodative history, equal sharing of economy, secularism, religious pursuits, a demographic political thinking and a people oriented art and literature. Since they are not isolated from the surrounding of non tribal societies and modernization are now vulnerable to outside influence. Such contacts with outside world have created dilemma in their life and culture resulting into an identity crisis. Neither are they able to acclimatize to the urban and alien values,
nor are they in a position to preserve and pursue their own traditional rites, rituals and customs. They are also gradually losing their identity because of their accommodative nature and readiness to mix with outsiders.

Bodos are the worshipers of nature. But a large scale devastation of forests owing to rapid industrialization, urbanization and consequent upon social forestry schemes, plantation of indigenous varieties mostly non indigenous in nature, quick growing trees have adversely affected their life pattern and religious beliefs. Traditional tribal religions such as animism, saran-dharam of nature worshiping are gradually being replaced by Christianity, Hinduism and others. Changes in the food habits of Bodos and their festivals are also quite evident. Bodos, for instance, are abstaining from beef eating and seem to be less interested in celebrating as a result of their close proximity with enamoring Hindu society. Possessing a very rich tradition of their own, they are thus, not only denying themselves of a rich protein diet but also sacrificing their age old cultural heritage. Besides, the Bodo society, traditionally known for its egalitarianism, is being divided today on religion lines and even on communal lines. Agriculture has been increasingly receiving a mere sub-servant type of status of other occupations like business and industry, services.

As a matter of fact, the tribal, unable to cope with the external pressure from all sides, are a frustrated lot and as a natural consequence developing marks of a negative identity of themselves. They feel that they are being branded by the civilized world as lazy people, underdeveloped and uncivilized. Thus, the notions of a noble, savage and a healthy tribe were fast becoming myth. These signs of
cultural degradation sometimes generate among the tribal a common psychology of identity assertion for their own survival.

2.1.4 Political Developments

The Bodos in Assam, at present, are a political minority and they take direct part in the politics of the country through a few reserved constituencies. The faulty delimitation and the democratic change brought about by the coming of new settlers have reduced them to an ineffective minority in many of these constituencies. The system of parliamentary democracy and government is based on the principle of majority votes polled and seats secured. In matters of polling majority votes, Bodos in Assam can never expect to win in any assembly or parliamentary constituency, even by casting 100 per cent votes, because even in reserved constituencies, tribal voters are slightly higher than 30 per cent only. This is because constituencies have been craftily delimitated by cutting away compact tribal inhabited areas into several portions and tagging them into non-schedule tribe majority constituencies in order to deprive them from sending their genuine representative to the assembly and parliament.

The political development of the seventies in India made the tribal people in their introspection to think differently. The State Reorganization Act (1971) and Art 244(A) of the Constitution empowers the Central Government to grant limited authority to the hill districts of Assam for the protection of the hill tribes and retention of their socio-economic and political identities. Ironically, plains tribes were totally excluded from the purview of art 244(A) and thus were being constitutionally discriminated though the tribal of Karbi- Anglong and N.C. Hills
were provided with limited autonomy through formation of autonomous district councils.

What has happened today has been due to the policy of the government of India towards tribes. In the sixties some of the hill districts of Assam with four to five lakhs of population were granted with statehood, the Bodos with 13 lakhs of population were denied such entitlement.

As we know the Govt. of India agreed to provide the Assamese society adequate constitutional, legal and administrative safeguard in the Assam Accord. The Accord, however, does not mention about the need for safeguards to minority communities and weaker sections like Bodos. They feel that the majority community in the state never accepted them as part of the Assamese community and society in true sense of the term even though they propound for a greater Assamese nationality.

The plains tribal were also left out from the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which provides for the establishment of the district councils for hill districts of N.E. Region including the state of Assam. These district Councils act as local self government for the benefit of the hill people, levies taxes on them for their revenue, and prevent the influx of outsiders into the hill districts besides preserving their tradition and culture. With regard to Mizoram and Tripura the Sixth Schedule was amended by the Lok Sabha on 29 Nov, 1988 and greater autonomy has been granted to the governments of these states towards the aspirations of the tribal. However, nothing in this regard has been done for the plains tribes in Assam. The plains tribal of Assam allege that the constitutional
discrimination is also evident in the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which sanction the constitution of the state level committees for the economic development and welfare of the tribal people all over India. The differentiation between the hill tribal and the plain tribal (Bodo) and the consequent special provisions extended to the hill tribal in the northeast is the root cause of ferment among the Bodos today. It is surprising that despite the Bodos being the largest tribal group in the state, no special constitutional arrangement was considered necessary to ensure a measure of political or at least administrative power to them.

The Bodo dominated area is in the north bank of the River Brahmaputra in the state of Assam. The Bodo movement was started with the objective of achieving a separate province or homeland for the plain tribe Bodo as they are living in the state of Assam since time immemorial. Certainly there is geographical and demographic concentration of tribal people in the area. The proposed area which has been demanded for homeland for the plains Bodos is tribal majority compact area and excludes the non tribal majority area. The proposed Bodoland area has got all feasibility and it satisfies all the criteria for a separate state. It comprises a contiguous area starting from Sonkosh river (West Bengal-Assam border) on the west to Sadiya on the East in the north bank of the Brahmaputra of Assam where the plains tribal people are mostly concentrated.

On the other hand, natural boundary is not an overall necessary factor for creating a separate state which is evident from the existing states. Even, contiguousness is not a rigid factor for the creation of a separate state like Goa
and Union Territory like Daman & Diu. As regards area, the proposed Bodoland will have enough area (25,478 sq. km) as well which is much bigger than the area of Meghalaya (22,429 sq. km), Mizoram (21,081 sq. km), Nagaland (16,579 sq. km) and Tripura (10,416 sq. km).

In terms of population there were 26 lakhs population in Bodoland Territorial Council or Bodoland Territorial Area District of which tribal population constituted 45.30 per cent and Bodos constituted 80.9 percent of tribal population whereas Meghalaya was having 23 lakhs population, Mizoram had 8.9 lakhs population only as per 2001 Census were granted statehood. Ironically, Bodoland has been repeatedly denied of such opportunities by some sections of politicians and intellectuals of the country when Bodo population and areas of proposed Bodoland have been significantly larger as compared to smaller northeastern states. Thus, from Bodo point of view there is every justification for the demand and creation of Bodoland.

Political self-determination only will be able to bring complete and concrete political as well as all-round security to the plains tribe Bodos in Assam. Alternative to that, nowhere they can feel safe and secured. A separate homeland for tribal only would be able to make the tribal prosperous nationalities. The plains tribal of Assam must have to enjoy the internationally accepted principle of right to political self-determination. As such tribal must have a self Govt. in Assam. The view of leaders are let the Assamese also enjoy the right to political self–determination, survive and prosper in a separate homeland and the plains tribal also must be allowed to survive and prosper in a separate homeland.
Apart from that, the 20th century can be said as an era of uprising of the tribal and down trodden people for the political right of self-determination in the world. At the global level, in every nook and corner, the people have been witnessing the struggle of the tribal and down trodden people for their political, constitutional and human rights. The question of right of self-determination is admitted by the United Nation; the Constitution of India also does not stand against it. Since demand for Bodoland stands for the question of right of self-determination, it is coherently agreeable that opposition to the demand will mean the opposition to the internationally accepted principle.

The idea and political philosophy of smaller states given by Late Joy Prakash Narayan should be experimented. The smaller states should be made true federating units of India with more autonomy which would solve the problems of communal clashes. The small administrative units may also progress rapidly, of course, with a socialistic, political philosophy, and an administrative set-up. Economic structure and systems will be much more favorable for solving multifarious problems of our country in a radical manner.

In the recent past, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power, it openly supported the concept of smaller states and adopted the policy to create three new states, namely, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chattishgarh carving out of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively. But while implementing the policy to create smaller states they adopted partisan attitude and accordingly the demand for Bodoland was looked down upon as per the wishes of the Chauvinist ruling clique in Assam. This only opened the path of never ending
crisis in the region. It is very pertinent to mention that if the U.S.A. having 50 states can run the country very smoothly and prosperously then why can’t India create some more states including Bodoland which would not only provide better administration but would also ensure balanced development among different linguistic groups in the country. This would probably go a long way not only in strengthening the nation but also in fulfilling the aspirations of every sections of the society including various ethnic groups of the country.

2.2 History of Bodo Aspirations

2.2.1 Pre-Independence Awareness

Bodos (also known as ‘Kacharis’) are the largest group among all other plain tribes of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. They are the earliest inhabitants of Indo-Mongoloid stock to settle in the valley. The first ethnographic account of the Bodos of Assam was published by Rev. Endle in 1911 in which they were referred to as Kachari. They were recognized as a scheduled tribe after independence. In the historical accounts of Ahoms called ‘Buranji’, this community is referred to as Kachari (Bhuyan 1951). It is the European scholars like Hodgson (1828) and Grierson (1903) who had used the term Kachari and Bodo interchangeably to refer to this linguistic group of Assam. Grierson (1903) identified them as Indo-Mongoloid people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family. He has further maintained that the generic name Bodo was first used by Hodgson to refer a group of languages.

Prior to the establishment of British rule in India the existence of the Bodos was on the verge of extinction. They were quite unaware of their societal
dignity, pride and honour. For centuries, tradition of structural assimilation as a process of social change remained as a popular tradition among the Bodos. The modern civilization installed by the British Govt. in India totally changed the traditional mindset of the Bodos. Under the new liberal intellectual atmosphere set by the British rule, the Bodo people developed the sense of self respect, identity consciousness of their society and soon they started to reassert their community identity by reviewing and restructuring their lost history, culture, tradition, custom, language etc.

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), the most influential organization campaigning for a separate Bodo homeland, defined the term ‘Bodo’ as those who speak or are supposed to have one spoken language belonging to the Bodo group. The Bodos are the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in Eastern India and they migrated from South-West China to North-East India through Tibet and Bhutan centuries ago. Historically, under colonial rule and also after independence, major sections of Bodos merged into the Assamese population.

It was under the British rule the Bodos first raised the demand for a separate homeland along with hill tribes of the north-east India. In 1929, the Kachari Yubak committee submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding safeguard which would ensure them an independent identity.
However, the formation of All Assam Plains Tribal League (AAPTL) in 1933 and Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) in 1952 reflected their quest for political power. This consciousness gradually took a definite form and developed to the stage of demanding statehood for Bodoland in order to safeguard the interest of Bodos through political means.
2.2.2 **Post-Independence Developments**

The emergence of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 has created among the Bodos a new revolution on Bodo language and literature. Since the formation, the Sabha worked for the welfare of Bodo society and under its banner it tried to unite all Bodo writers towards developing Bodo language. The Sabha gives a platform to develop Bodo language systematically in written forms and helped the writers to create Bodo literature through its banner. The Sabha has been demanding introduction of Bodo as a medium of instruction ever since its inception. The movement for reassertiveness was started with this socio-cultural organization among the Bodos after Independence.

In 1967, when Smt Indira Gandhi declared for reorganization of Assam state on a federal basis, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) warmly welcomed the statement and since then the Bodos under the banner of ABSU have been demanding bifurcation of Assam for the creation of a separate state for the plain tribal of Assam.

The political awakening of the Bodos took a new turn on 27th February, 1967 with the formation of a political party, **Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA)** (Brahma, 2001). Ever since its formation with the support of ABSU as the largest political party, has been demanding a separate Union Territory to be called “Udayachal” comprising of the Bodo-dominated areas all along the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra extending from the western border of Kokrajhar district right up to the eastern border of North Lakhimpur district (Roy, 1995). However, the demand for Udayachal never materialized. Many political
parties came to power, thus players changed and so did the game. By the end of 70's it became clear that Bodos had a little or no influence in the Indian political process.

In 1968, the PTCA launched a campaign to boycott the General Election, particularly in the Kokrajhar Parliamentary Constituency, which is the only reserve seat for tribal out of the 14 parliamentary seats in the state. In their bid to stop candidate from filing nominations many Bodos were subjected to bullet injuries and police torture. A map of the proposed “Udayachal” state was prepared and a memorandum was submitted to the then President Sri V.V. Giri, Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi and also the Home Ministry. ABSU with the support of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and other allied Bodo organizations demanded for “Bodoland” which was the direct legacy of the PTCA movement for “Udayachal”. The PTCA which initially had the support of the ABSU had unsuccessfully pressed the demand during re-organization of the north-eastern region.

The Bodos, under the banner of ABSU thus withdrew support to the PTCA in 1979. It was realized that the PTCA did not press seriously for the Bodos during prolonged negotiations that preceded the North-Eastern Area (Re-organization) Act 1971.

Thus the demand for creation of a homeland for the plains tribal of Bodos in the shape of “Udayachal” became a major blank of political movement by the Bodos during the seventies and their peaceful movement turned out to be a violent one and thus invited police action. The party could not do anything even after
lapse of seventeen years since its formation. The common people lost their confidence in the organization and started to reject the same.

The creation of new states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in the recent past created more enthusiasm among the Bodo leaders and they started revitalizing their aspiration for a separate Bodo land. They became more conscious about their separate identity, language and culture to protect them as distinct position in the national life of the country.

Ever since ABSU started their movement, AASU had launched a violent movement against foreigners to drive them out from Assam. During initial six years of movement of AASU both ABSU and other Bodo allied organizations and political leaders extended full support to AASU leaders in their anti-foreigners’ movement for the greater interest of the state of Assam (Chattopadhay, 1990). Ultimately their movement came to an end with the signing of the Assam Accord on 15th August 1985 under the initiative of the then Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi. In accordance with the terms of the said Accord, the congress Ministry of Assam resigned, the Assembly was dissolved and a fresh general election was held. The AASU leaders, who had already passed their students status, formed a new regional political party namely Asom Gana Parighat (AGP) and participated in the election under the banner of the new party. As expected they won with a very comfortable majority and formed the new Assam Government. The Bodos were also participants in the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) movement and expected the AGP govt. to realize their grievance. As the post accord euphoria died down, the Bodos and other tribal felt that the attention of AGP Govt. to tribal
was no different from the earlier Govt. As disillusionment spread among the Bodos, Bodos and Non-Bodos relations in the tribal area deteriorated, the ABSU soon took over the leadership of the restive tribal youth.

The objectives of AASU movement were to drive out foreigners from Assam and to bring peace to the state by preserving the identities of various ethnic groups and tribal people in the state. After coming to power the AGP Government tried their best to promote only the Assamese language and culture in total exclusion of any other indigenous group and their language and culture in total violation of the Clause 6 of Assam Accord. The ABSU leaders and leaders of other Bodo allied organizations naturally took it as complete negation of the composite and diverse cultural and linguistic milieu of Assam (Roy, 1995). The other Clause of the Accord provided for strict enforcement of all relevant laws to ensure prevention of encroachment on lands of tribal people and that of Government lands. The leaders of ABSU and Bodo Peoples Action Committee (BPAC) apprehended, though not altogether devoid of reasoning, non implementation of the second part of the clause which would affect adversely the Bodo in the state.

Ever since ABSU launched its movement on 2nd March 1987, it has completed various phases of its agitation and has been able to mobilize mass support mostly in the Bodo dominated areas. Some Bodo dominated areas like Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Nalbari and Udalguri have become the centre of the militant activities for Bodoland. For exactly ten years now, the Bodos under the banner of ABSU has been spearheading what it calls a “mass-revolution” for a separate
homeland and a full-fledged state for the plains Bodos though their original demand as incorporated in their first memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Sri P.K. Mahanta and former State Governor, Sri Bhishma Narain Singh on 1st January 1987, was a separate homeland with the status of a Union Territory. The Bodo movement initially included 92 demands of many points of vital interests to the Bodos were abandoned in favour of three principal political demands.

Initially the Bodo movement was not violent, but it gradually turned into militant one because of apathetic attitude and policies of alienation towards Bodos by the state Government. Several tripartite talks were held among the representatives of the ABSU-BPAC with the governments at the Center and the State in New Delhi. In spite of holding nine tripartite talks on the issue no concrete response was received, either from the State or from the Central Government excepting hollow verbal assurance. The leaders of movement once again declared a 1001 hours total Assam bandh starting from 21st November 1992. Large scale violence broke out during this bandh. Looking at the grim situation during bandh the then Home Minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan called upon the leaders of the movement called by ABSU-BPAC to put an end to it and assured that the Central Government would take necessary measures to solve Bodo problem. Accordingly the bandh was called off which was the last bandh called by ABSU-BPAC during their 6 years of long movement (Brahma, 2001).

Accordingly, the Central Govt. and Govt. of Assam kept their assurance to look into the Bodo issue. The year 1993 witnessed a significant development in
the political setup of the Bodos. A historic record known as Bodo Accord was signed on 20th February 1993 and this led the creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) with the objective to provide maximum autonomy to the Bodos for their socio-economic, ethnic and cultural advancement of course within the framework of the Constitution.

However, soon after the formation of BAC, both the Governments were urged to finalize the total number of villages to be included under the jurisdiction of BAC and to demarcate the area in consultation with ABSU-BPAC as per the Accord. But trouble arose while identifying such villages having 50 per cent or more population of plain tribe. ABSU-BPAC and the State Govt. failed in taking a final decision as no consensus emerged on village-wise population figures on plain tribes under BAC. In order to overcome this difficulty the Govt. of India in consultation with both the parties appointed an Expert Committee on 25th February 1993 to undertake a field study and to identify the villages and localities to be included in BAC. The Expert Committee after examining the situation finally submitted its report to the Govt. along with its recommendations. Ultimately a settlement was reached and the Government of Assam issued a Notification bearing No. TAD/BAC/26/93/18 dated 10th December, 1993 demarcating the geographical jurisdiction of the said Council. In all 2570 villages situated in a vast and contiguous area extending from the western border of Kokrajhar right up to eastern border of Majbat Constituency of Darrang district were included in the Council area. Since demarcation of contiguous area did not satisfy all the sections of ABSU-BPAC leaders, many of them took their firm stand and urged both the Governments to include five hundred more villages in it.
However, the Government did not readily concede their demand but agreed to look into the matter for further consideration. Finally, the Bodo leaders under the banner of ABSU-BPAC adopted a resolution and declared to denounce the first Bodo Accord and resumed the movement with new vigour.

The Bodos, particularly ABSU volunteers who had surrendered to the government after the signing the first Bodo Accord, some of them formed a militant group, Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) in a meeting held at Dotoma in Kokrajhar district on June 18, 1996. Conforming to the political demand of ABSU, the extremist group, BLT resolved to adopt an ideology of creating a separate State remaining within the sovereignty of India. The mass people extended their support to BLT in the interest of their ultimate goal, the Bodoland state (Brahma, 2001).

Ultimately after a long 10 years of movement the time came for signing of Bodo Accord-II on 10th February 2003 with which Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) comprising all the 3082 villages was created with an amendment under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

The Bodoland Territorial Council constituted in 2003 is the latest autonomous council to have been constituted under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. The BTC has an area of 8970 sq.km which is about 11.4 per cent of the total geographical area of Assam. There are four newly created districts under the Council, namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. These districts have been carved out from the original district of Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur. There are ten Sub-Divisions
including district head quarters, 25 Development Blocks and 3082 Villages under the Council.

The formation of the BTC is a consequent of a long drawn movement for creation of a separate state for the Bodos, one of the largest plain tribes of Assam. Initially in 1993, an agreement was reached between centre and state government and representatives of the Bodo community, which led to the formation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) constituted under the Bodoland Autonomous Council Act of 1993 (Assam Act of 1993). However, right from the start, the functioning of the BAC was marred by serious ambiguity regarding the territorial jurisdiction and also the powers and function of the council. This led to re-emergence of the demand for separate statehood. Finally, on 10th of February 2003, after series of rounds of negotiation, a memorandum of understanding was signed amongst the central government, state government and the Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) for creation of Bodoland Territorial Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Consequent to this agreement, the sixth schedule to the constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003, was passed by parliament and the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was constituted as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. Accordingly, the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) was added to as item No. 3 of Part I of the table appended to Paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
2.3 Chapter Summary

The above analysis shows that political economy of Bodo movement which started as a socio-cultural movement during the last part of the twentieth century emerged not from a single factor but it comprised of many issues with which the movement crystallized. Socio-economic, ethnic identity and cultural heritage, language, etc were the main forces which worked behind the Bodo movement.

Historical aspiration among Bodos was a revolution. The analysis throws light that though Bodos were on the verge of extinction before the establishment of British administration in India, it was British rule in India which totally changed the traditional mindset of the Bodos. It was the British people who encouraged the Bodos to develop the sense of self respect and identity consciousness of their society. Their encouragement helped the Bodos to start to reassert their community identity. It is also found that during British rule, Bodos first raised the demand for a separate homeland along with hill tribes of the north-east India. In the beginning of the twentieth century Bodo-Kachari identity assertion emerged when they submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding electoral roll to safeguard their independent identity. However, the emergence of All Assam Plains Tribal League (AAPTL) in 1933 reflected their quest for political power and their consciousness gradually took a definite form, developed to the stage of demanding statehood for Bodos in order to safeguard their interest through political means. But there was slow flow of consciousness among Bodos before independence.
The study also revealed that after India’s independence, there was strong identity assertion among Bodos. The emergence of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) in 1952 has created among the Bodos a new revolution on Bodo language and literature. Since the formation, the Sabha worked for the welfare of Bodo society and under its banner it tried to unite all Bodo writers towards developing Bodo language. The Sabha gives a platform to develop Bodo language systematically in written forms and helped the writers to create Bodo literature through its banner. The Sabha has been demanding introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction ever since its inception. The movement for re-assertiveness was started with this socio-cultural organization among the Bodos after Independence. Accordingly, All Bodo Students Union and a political party, as Plains Tribal Council of Assam emerged in 1967. The formation of these organizations united Bodo people on language, cultural heritage, and ethnic identity. It was also found that they tried for establishment of a distinct and separate identity in the national life.